# COMRADES *of the* ROLLING OCEAN



RALPH D. PAINE

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## COMRADES OF THE ROLLING OCEAN

By RALPH D. PAINE

Judson Wyman throws over college in his sophomore year to sign up for a training course in the merchant marine. On his way to Newport News he picks up a pal, "Kid" Briscoe, bound for the same destination although he has already seen service in the navy during the war and calls himself a hard-boiled guy. Training over, they take service on the ship "Liberty Chimes" where they meet Judson's former tutor, Spencer Torrence, as super-cargo. Near the Holland coast they strike a forgotten mine and are torpedoed. The badly damaged ship is abandoned by her entire crew and captain, all but the three chums who succeed in seeing her safely into port and saving a valuable cargo. Their next trip is equally full of thrilling adventures all of which goes to prove that a sailor's life in the modern merchant marine is not lacking in opportunity for displaying valor and courage and romantic adventure.

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# Comrades of the Rolling Ocean

by

Ralph D. Paine

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# COMRADES OF THE ROLLING OCEAN

# Comrades of The Rolling Ocean

BY

RALPH D. PAINE

AUTHOR OF
FIRST DOWN, KENTUCKY!, ETC.

PUBLISHERS
GROSSET & DUNLAP
NEW YORK

Made in the United States of America

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# COMRADES OF THE ROLLING OCEAN

## CHAPTER I

### A VERY OLD MAN ARRIVES

THIS story opens with a football game and a hero who was wide across the shoulders and stood six feet in his socks, but you are mistaken in assuming that he battered his way down the field for the winning touchdown of the championship game while the most beautiful girl in the grand-stand lost her heart to him. That is how it ought to have happened, of course, but Judson Wyman was no campus idol and his career as an athlete was, in fact, a blighted failure. The captain of the eleven used stronger language than this, and called him a lazy, fat-headed dub who disgraced the spirit and traditions of Follansbee College, at which Judson Wyman smiled in that slow, absent manner of his and agreed that the statement was probably correct.

This occurred during a practice game early in the season when the students had marched to the field in a body, urged by the appeals of the frenzied cheer leaders to back up the team and show them that the fellows were there with the old pep. It was a small

college in a prairie town of North Dakota where the main street ran straight out into the boundless wheat-fields and all the buildings looked raw and new to Eastern eyes. Against a sky that dipped low to meet a wide horizon loomed the lofty row of grain elevators which made the town of Follansbee a haven of a golden harvest. The college was so young that the oldest living graduate pushed a baby carriage as his favorite outdoor sport, but the community was immensely proud that a seat of learning flourished in its midst and felt that it had a splendid destiny.

Through his freshman year young Judson Wyman had loyally tried to make the best of this chance to gain an education. His mother and father thought it the greatest prize that the game of life could offer their only son. This was their supreme ambition, that he should receive a diploma from Follansbee College, and to this end they gladly endured self-denial and sacrifice. The right kind of parents live mostly for their children, who do not always realize it. Because he did see quite clearly what this precious education meant to his folks, Judson Wyman was unhappy. Reluctant to hurt and disappoint them, he kept it to himself as long as he could. He had not found out what he was good for, but he knew he did not belong in college.

He studied hard and painfully to keep a decent stand in his classes, but the subjects failed to interest him and the textbooks muddled his mind. He was not stupid otherwise, although some people may

have thought so because he was no fluent talker and kept his opinions to himself. There was a rugged honesty and courage in him that earned the respect of those who knew him well. In short, he was plodding through college, shoved along by a sense of duty, while other lads made a light-hearted pastime of it.

The autumn of sophomore year found Judson Wyman harder and browner and tougher of muscle after a summer's hard work as a farmhand. The college expected him to tear the opposing football teams apart and eat 'em alive. He went at it earnestly. The unlucky young men who were left in his wake when he tore through a rush-line were apt to conclude that football was not a sport but a battle. It was noticed, however, that after a fortnight or so he lost interest and made costly blunders through lack of attention. In vain the peppery little captain yelled insults at him. He was thinking of something else besides football.

The climax was so extraordinary that it left the college more puzzled than angry. In one fierce scrimmage after another the first eleven was gaining ground in brilliant style against the bruised and breathless second team while the crowd cheered approval. It was the most encouraging practice game of the season and the towering figure of the offensive was Judson Wyman at left guard who brushed the tacklers aside as if they merely annoyed him. During a pause in the play he happened to glance beyond the field as he stood wiping the blood

and dust from his face. There was no surrounding fence to bar his view of the prairie and the road which ran out from Follansbee to veer off to the eastward and join the main highway that linked distant cities.

A small automobile came chugging along, outward bound from town, and halted opposite the open expanse of football field. It was a shabby, weary-looking flivver that rattled its bones over the sun-baked ruts and was afflicted with asthma in the motor. A middle-aged man was humped over the wheel in a sort of listless posture which suggested that his spirits matched the car. His clothes sort of sagged on his thin frame and his hair was grayer than it should have been. He seemed to brighten and brace up when he caught sight of the tall figure of Judson Wyman among the football players, and he waved his hand in a cheery gesture of greeting. Then he urged the tired flivver on its way and steered out across the prairie.

The Follansbee College eleven grouped itself for the next shrill signal of the quarterback, but "Jud" Wyman was deaf to the summons and stood apart, still gazing at the lonely little car as it crawled over the slight undulations of the landscape and was visible now and then like a boat that rises between the hollows of the ocean waves. It dwindled to a black speck while young Wyman stared like a man in a trance. This singular performance delayed the football game. The coach bellowed at him and the captain assailed him like a hornet, but he brushed them away until he was ready to say:

"Sorry I bothered you. You will have to put in a substitute. I'm all through. Nothing doing. I hope it won't hurt the team, but you know that I have n't been much good lately."

The captain lost his temper and could only sputter and shake his fists, but the coach had more tact and patience. His hand was upon Wyman's shoulder as he inquired:

"What is the matter, old man? Hit on the head and knocked dizzy in that last center play, were you? Sure I'll run in a sub and you go lie down."

"There is as much sense in my head as there ever was," was the blunt reply, "and a little bit more. I can't explain. You could n't see things my way. I'd hate myself if I fooled around playing football another minute. The college can call me a quitter if it wants to."

This was precisely what the college proceeded to do, as voiced by the crowd at the edge of the field. No other duty in life was to be compared with licking the stuffing out of all rivals. Groans and shouts of bitter rebuke followed the deserter as he walked slowly toward the dressing-room. With unruffled deliberation, although his cheek burned red and his lip quivered, he kicked off his football togs, stalked under the shower, and rubbed that splendid big body of his until it glowed. While he put on his clothes the troubled expression was fading from his eyes, a smile broke through the gloom of his chronic discontent, and he was actually whistling when he swung into the road and walked back to town.

He frowned again, however, at turning into the street where he lived. His eye was caught by a small frame box of a building which served as an office. It needed paint, as did also the house which stood in the same yard, and upon the front it bore the sign —

HORACE P. WYMAN
REAL ESTATE AND INSURANCE

The street wore an air so spruce and comfortable that the run-down, rather discouraged aspect of this house and office seemed forlorn by contrast. It was even surprising to find them in a community so buoyantly prosperous and enterprising. Judson Wyman sighed as he unlatched the gate, hesitated awkwardly, and showed symptoms of panic. He had stolidly ignored the opinion of the college, but facing his mother was a different matter. She came to the door, a woman serene and rosy in spite of many troubles and unending toil, and exclaimed in her bright, eager way:

"Why, Jud, what in the world are you doing at home in the middle of the afternoon? Don't tell me you 've been hurt playing football. Of course I worry a lot — it 's so terribly rough and — "

"Still sound in wind and limb, mother," he gravely assured her. "I came home to have a little talk with you. Let 's sit down on the porch."

She nodded and waited for him to say what was in his mind. They understood each other so well

that his long silences seldom disturbed her. She went in to get the darning-basket, for those busy hands of hers rebelled against idleness, and Judson picked up the morning newspaper which he pretended to study for some time. At length, he looked up to say:

"I saw Dad pass in the car while we were out at the field. He decided to make the trip to Ellensville, did he? That was my guess. He talked it over with me after breakfast, but he seemed to hope — "

"Yes, your father always hopes," Mrs. Wyman broke in, with a touch of sadness. "The deal fell through. The corporation selected another agent to handle its land business. Younger, more active men seem to have the preference."

"And so he drove to Ellensville to borrow a little more money on a note," Judson burst out, with unusual emotion — "to borrow from that old friend of his just to keep things going a while longer. Dad is the kindest, finest man that ever lived, mother, but he lacks the punch. It has been one hard-luck story after another, ever since I can remember — running a country newspaper, a general store, selling bonds, and now this real estate stuff. They have hustled him right off the earth in this town."

The brutal truth shocked Mrs. Wyman, who protested:

"His old-fashioned notions of honesty may have stood in his way for one thing, Jud, but his greatest handicap has been the lack of a college education. In a professional career he would have made a suc-

cess, I am sure. You are starting off ever so much better and it is the greatest joy that could come to us."

"Yes, I stood and watched him beating it in the old flivver," said Judson, as though talking to himself, "and I knew what his errand was. It was the last straw. I came to with a jolt. I've done what I could to help by earning money in odd times, but I have to study *so* infernally hard to keep up. When it comes to the book stuff, I'm solid celluloid above the collar. I am paying most of my own bills, at that, but look what is happening to you. Even this house is liable to be snatched out from under you. Dad does n't realize it, of course."

Dreading the conclusion of this stormy disclosure, the mother exclaimed:

"You are no burden at all. And three more years will see you an educated man. Your father and I have always managed somehow."

"But I don't belong in college anyhow," cried Judson. "I'm the wrong kind to send there. It is a dead waste of time and money when I ought to be making our load easier. Please don't make it harder for me. Try to understand, won't you? I quit college right now, quit it cold, and I'll have a job by to-morrow morning, and you just bet that you and Dad will know it whenever my pay-day rolls around. I am going to make good at something. If I ever let up or weaken, all I need to think of is poor old Dad in that flivver. It surely did hit me square between the eyes."

It was a prolonged discussion, stubbornly waged by Judson on the one hand and continued by a grieving, bewildered mother, who was nevertheless praying that she might read her boy's heart aright, and who had seen many other bright dreams of her own obscured. The years had taught her the wisdom of great sympathy and tolerance for the judgments of youth which sees only the goal and ignores the obstacles that block the path to it. Middle-aged people often preach caution because they are so familiar with failure.

Judson Wyman felt that the task of convincing his father would be much easier. Late in the afternoon the exhausted flivver rolled into the yard with a final rattle and cough and Mr. Horace P. Wyman uncurled himself from behind the wheel and trudged up the front steps. Before he spoke it was evident that his financial voyage across the prairie had been unsuccessful. He drooped even more than usual and nervously fingered his chin as he seated himself upon the edge of a bench and murmured something about the weather. He was a beaten man. For the present the last ounce of fight had been knocked out of him.

"Never mind explaining it, Dad," gently observed the strapping son. "I'm glad you could n't borrow any more money. I intend to divide the worries with you, fifty-fifty. I can't get far with real estate and insurance, but you just watch me drive a truck or shovel gravel at five bucks per day."

"What — what? And interfere with your education?" exclaimed Mr. Horace P. Wyman, jumping

to his feet. "Not another word, Judson. I refuse to listen."

"Listen, Dad," pursued the mutinous son. "I have been over the whole thing with mother, and once is enough. There are more kinds of education than you dig out of a college campus. Why be a darned misfit? Suspend judgment and watch my smoke. That's all I ask."

Life was one thing after another with Mr. Horace P. Wyman, and after a feeble objection or two, he turned to his wife as had been his habit in every hour of trial. It was time to get supper, and at her suggestion he meekly followed her into the kitchen where Judson heard their voices, the father's a little petulant and complaining, the mother's sweet and strong and calm as always. Soon the son sauntered out of the gate and into the main street. Half an hour later he had obtained a job as teamster for the lumber company at wages which promised a better income than the salaries of some of the instructors at Follansbee College. His head was up and he walked alertly. Right or wrong, he had followed the call of duty.

The family discussion during the evening was interrupted by a caller, Mr. Spencer Torrance, a slender, shy young man who had been Judson's instructor in the sophomore English course. He was not many years out of college and took himself seriously. The campus mimicked his precise speech and thought him a bit sissified. Judson Wyman had agreed with this opinion and regarded the spectacled

scholar with a sort of good-natured contempt. He greeted Mr. Torrance with more politeness than cordiality, but felt somewhat ashamed of himself when the instructor announced:

"I just now heard that you had left college very abruptly, Wyman. It has made a commotion, for football is the chief end of existence in this semester, but I knew you must have some good reason. If I can be of any service, please command me. I have had an idea that you were — er — shall I call it disheartened? If you need more help in your studies, or that sort of thing — "

"No, it was n't that, thank you," smiled Judson, more amazed than he could have expressed. "I had a rotten stand in your course and never showed the slightest interest in it, so I can't understand why you should bother your head about me."

"Perhaps I know a little more of human nature than I have found in books," replied Spencer Torrance. "And manliness scores a hundred per cent with me, even if it is not rated in the college system of marks. I felt acquainted with you in the classroom, you see, though you seemed to have no great use for me."

Judson blushed at this and had the grace to mumble: "We did n't seem to have any interests in common, Mr. Torrance — and — and — I am just one of those big, husky thick-heads that you could n't hammer any culture into to save your life. It is mighty kind of you to look me up, but I'm not going back to college."

"If you found difficulty in earning your way," timidly suggested the instructor, "and a loan would tide you over, why, I happen to be in funds and —"

"I am tired and sick of borrowed money," rudely exclaimed Judson; and then hastily apologized, "I did n't mean it to sound that way. I was thinking of something else. Forgive me, will you?"

Spencer Torrance was a keen-witted young man, and he understood, in a flash of comprehension, what the trouble was. The affair lay beyond his help and he was too much of a gentleman to be an intruder.

"My opinion of you was sound, and the college is mistaken, Wyman," said he. "The Golden Rule is nobler than all the textbooks ever written and I think you are trying to live up to it. I wish we might be friends — "

"I hope to see you again, Mr. Torrance," replied Judson, who was sincerely grateful, but his candid face betrayed the fact that as a chum this studious expert in English literature was a hopeless proposition. He meant well, but it would bore a fellow to death to have to live with him. Reading this silent verdict, Spencer Torrance made no more effort to win the boy's confidence and felt that he had been rebuffed. Of course a member of the faculty was regarded as a natural enemy, but in this instance the instructor had hoped to find a way through the barrier.

Having broken away from the college and all its ties, Judson was much more concerned with making

good in his new job. His parents ceased to oppose him, for he was a difficult young man to stop when he got under headway, as certain half-backs had learned to their sorrow. In their hearts the father and mother fondly admired the unselfish devotion which had prompted his course. At the end of the first week he dumped his wages upon the sitting-room table, holding out only the price of a new pair of shoes and two dollars for incidentals.

It turned out that there was more need than ever for those broad shoulders of his to prop the tottering supports of real estate and insurance. To Mrs. Wyman came a letter from distant New England which, for once, disturbed that beautiful serenity of hers. At dinner she broke the news to the rest of the family.

"Sister Caroline writes from Rockland, Maine, that grandfather Lancaster is determined to come out and spend the winter with us. Caroline says her health is n't what it was and the care of the old gentleman is too much for her, and I have always been so well and strong and equal to anything."

These Eastern kinfolk were shadowy people to Judson, who had never laid eyes on any of them, and he naturally inquired:

"What do you know about him? And why should he be wished on us?"

"Captain William Lancaster is your great-grandfather," answered Mrs. Wyman, "and he is ninety years old, at least. Let me see, there was an Old Home Week in Rockland two years ago and they

made quite a fuss over him. He celebrated his ninetieth birthday then, I am sure."

"He was a sea captain," added Mr. Wyman, who glanced anxiously at the door as though the old gentleman might pop in at any moment and take command. "I never knew much about him. The Atlantic Ocean is a long way from North Dakota, Jud, and none of us ever saw it."

"Ninety-two years old!" said the disgusted Judson. "Why, I'll have to carry him up and down stairs and he will break in two if I happen to bump him. Don't you have to feed 'em with a spoon when they get as old as that?"

"Sister Caroline does n't go into particulars," sighed Mrs. Wyman. "She thinks we are in easy circumstances and have everything to do with, I presume. I don't see how we can refuse, do you, Horace? Grandfather Lancaster has lived with her for twenty-odd years and she deserves a rest."

"I don't see how we can refuse, my dear," sadly agreed her husband. "You will remember that when I was in the newspaper business, your sister tided me over with a very generous loan. We will do our best to make Captain William Lancaster comfortable in his last days."

"Then I'll wire Caroline to-night," said Mrs. Wyman, who was her capable self again. "She intends to send the old gentleman along with some friends who are going through to California next week."

"And I thought I was getting this family straight-

ened out," gloomily reflected Judson as he passed his plate for a third helping of pot roast and potatoes.

Try as they might to think of it as a family obligation which they were in duty bound to undertake, the Wymans could not help regarding the visitation as a calamity. It overhung the household like a cloud. They were sorry for themselves and even more so for this aged man, enfeebled by his tremendous burden of years, who was kept alive by the charity of his descendants. In the eyes of Judson Wyman his father and mother were pretty old people, and all grandfathers had one foot in the grave. As for a great-grandfather, that was too much for the imagination. Meanwhile a room was made ready for the guest, and Mr. Horace Wyman fidgeted between the house and the office and spoke to the family doctor about going with him to meet the Pacific Limited on the fateful day.

Judson was at the station to lend a helping hand and to lift the incredibly old gentleman into a hired auto whose driver was instructed to proceed as carefully as though he had a cargo of uncrated eggs. When the train thundered in from its swift flight across the prairie and came to a grinding halt at the wooden station of Follansbee, a black porter in a white jacket opened the door of a Pullman vestibule and hopped off with two leather bags. Judson and his father hurried to help in the task of unloading the venerable, decrepit passenger.

They saw the porter offer a hand to a small, clean-shaven man who stepped down carefully, but with a

certain air of brisk decision as though perfectly competent to go his own gait if necessary. He was very dapper and notably well-dressed. No tailor in Follansbee could turn out clothes as smartly cut as those. The snow-white hair trimmed close, and the lines and wrinkles which deeply criss-crossed the old gentleman's face told their own story, but he held his trim little figure erect. The porter grinned as he said in farewell:

"Thank you, Cap'n, yessuh, an' happy days. Yo' suttinly did make me step lively this trip."

Mr. Horace P. Wyman forgot his manners and blinked in a dazed manner at this bantam of a great-grandfather whose keen, blue eyes roved about in search of friends. Judson nudged his parent who moved forward to shout in the pilgrim's right ear:

"Can this be Captain Lancaster? I am Horace Wyman and this is my boy."

The ancient mariner smiled to show a very white set of false teeth and replied in a voice, which was high-pitched, but without a quaver in it:

"Don't yell at me, Horace. I'm not deaf, thank God. Safe ashore, eh? Bear a hand, if you please, and we'll trot along with this dunnage of mine."

Judson picked up the bags and took the trunk checks while his father steered Captain William Lancaster to the waiting auto. The family doctor who had hovered in the offing was seen to chuckle as he took his departure. The long journey had tired the great-grandfather. During the ride to the house

his chin dropped now and then and his hands trembled, but he had never known what it was to weaken and his spirit was unflinching. The streets and the people of Follansbee interested him, and he asked many questions of Judson, who seemed to have won his fancy at first sight. Mrs. Wyman met them at the gate, ready to serve tea or hot broth to revive the exhausted traveler. She was a woman nobly tall, and Captain William Lancaster gallantly stood on tiptoe to print a resounding smack on her rosy cheek.

"Bless my stars!" said she, laughing like a girl. "There must be some mistake. The calendar is all twisted. He will never let you carry him upstairs, Jud."

"What 's that nonsense?" snapped the captain. "I am a terribly old man, Annie Wyman, and liable to snuff out like a candle any minute, but I don't propose to be pitied and coddled or wrapped in cotton wool. A tough old bit of oak timber, pickled in brine, and I have weathered ninety-two years."

A sense of relief lighted the household like a gleam of sunshine. Already they foresaw that the visitor from Maine would be a lively diversion instead of a burden. And a curious thing about it was the feeling that he had taken charge of affairs as soon as he stepped across the threshold. While they sat and gazed and wondered, he shrewdly took stock of them, and his queries bored as straight as a gimlet. He was soon aware that Horace Wyman was more or less of a failure as a business man, but he made no

comment, and seemed more interested in the vigorous, splendid mother and her son who were of his own flesh and blood. Concerning himself he had very little to say. These prairie folks knew nothing about the sea and cared less, as he sized them up.

## CHAPTER II

### A STRAPPING YOUNG MAN DEPARTS

THE dapper little Captain Lancaster slept late next morning. Judson and his father had left the house, but when the guest came downstairs, he insisted on going out for a short walk. He almost lost his temper when Mrs. Wyman frankly expressed a fear of letting him wander about alone. Wishing to see the college campus, which was only a few blocks away, he toddled off with his cane and might have been seen to cross the streets with wary caution as though he realized that he was a pretty brittle object, after all. The morning hours passed and the aged sight-seer failed to return to his harbor. Mrs. Wyman waited until almost noon, and then hastened over to the campus and down the main street without finding a trace of her missing grandparent. Greatly worried, she was thankful to find Judson when she returned home.

"I know you hate to go near the college," she exclaimed, "with all the horrid feeling against you, on account of your deserting the football team, but I am so distressed I don't know what to do. Have you any idea where your father is?"

"On his way to the office. I saw him downtown. I can pick him up and we'll both hit the trail. The college has forgotten all about me by this time. And

what difference does it make, anyhow? Most of those sophomores would run if I said boo at 'em."

As soon as Mr. Horace Wyman arrived to hear the alarming tidings, he wheeled and set off at a gallop with Judson at his heels. To mislay a visitor in this strange manner was certainly a shabby kind of hospitality. Of course they feared the worst and were sure that the willful old gentleman had dropped dead or an automobile had hit him or his mind had become affected. The campus was searched in vain. Nobody remembered seeing a person of his description pottering about. The disappearance was uncanny. Mr. Horace Wyman, much flustered and with a wild look in his eye, was about to step into the registrar's office and telephone the police to send out a general alarm when Judson yelled joyfully and pointed at a path which ran between two dormitory buildings.

They beheld the trim figure of the lost ancestor, but he was not strolling alone. Arm-in-arm with him was Mr. Spencer Torrance, the youthful instructor in English. No longer shy and ill-at-ease, you might have supposed that he had found a long-lost grandparent of his own. The pair of them were talking with the greatest animation, stopping now and then to put their heads together and turn over the pages of a book. To emphasize a point the old man pounded the young one on the back, and then they laughed together with the most enjoyable excitement.

"Now what do you think of that?" murmured Judson, with a perplexed grin. "Could you beat it?"

"Your great-grandfather is not easy to figure out," gasped Mr. Horace Wyman, who was out of breath and perspiring freely.

Captain William Lancaster flourished his cane at them and dragged his companion like a prisoner, exclaiming at the top of his shrill voice:

"I am fetching Torrance along to dinner with us. Pot luck, and all that. Annie won't mind. She's a brick. Afraid to refuse, were n't you, Torrance, my boy? Had you cowed in proper style."

"Absolutely. My hands are up," agreed the youthful member of the faculty, and then they both laughed uproariously at some secret understanding.

"We shall be delighted," faltered Mr. Horace Wyman, more upset than ever. "Had you met before somewhere? Is this a reunion?"

"Never laid eyes on him in my life," piped the mariner, "but I don't propose to lose him now. He is a wonderful young man. Why the dickens did n't you tell me about him?"

"We happened to meet just after the first recitation hour," explained Spencer Torrance, "and he was asking me about the buildings and so on when one remark led to another. He told me his name and that he was a retired shipmaster and I made a wild guess. It seemed perfectly impossible, of course, like a voice from the glorious past. I could n't believe my ears or eyes, but it was all true. I dismissed my classes for the rest of the forenoon, and we bowled into my room and locked the door, and we have been talking a blue streak ever since."

"If you don't mind giving me a clue or something that I can make head or tail of," implored Horace Wyman, in a dying voice. He could stand just about so much. Judson's face was perfectly blank. When things happened too fast, his mind stalled on a dead center, or so he said. There was a wicked twinkle in the blue eye of the ancient mariner. These North Dakota relatives of his had never taken the trouble to find out whether he amounted to anything or not. To them he was a useless, troublesome piece of old junk. Well, they were about due to find out.

"You tell it, my boy," he said to Torrance. "My confounded modesty always did stand in my way. I was a retiring little cuss even in my active years."

"Do you mean to say I have to tell *you* who he is?" cried the astonished instructor. "One of the most famous sailors that ever drove a Yankee clipper around Cape Horn? The skipper that made a record passage under sail from New York to Frisco with a mutinous crew that put two bullets in him?"

"In the *Flying Cloud* it was — year of 1854," chirruped the little old man. "I had the scrapings of all hell in the fo'castle that voyage — a rough crowd, but they were properly tamed before we backed the mainyard for the Frisco pilot. Putting seven of 'em in irons after they shot the daylights out of me left us mighty short-handed, but we pushed the old hooker along. You see, I had learned my trade as mate of an Atlantic packet in the forties. I was n't a mite older than Judson here when I stormed across

the Western Ocean with a crew of wild Liverpool packet rats to keep under by main strength."

"By main strength?" exclaimed Judson, whose eyes had opened very wide and who could not believe his ears.

"Well, there had to be strict discipline in those ships," mildly answered the famous skipper. "I generally managed to let 'em know who was master."

Spencer Torrance opened the book in his hand to show them a picture of the stately clipper *Flying Cloud* as she swept before the southern trade winds under tall spires of snowy canvas that seemed to rake the sky. Man's handiwork had never created anything more beautiful than such a ship as this.

"Here it all is," said Torrance. "You will enjoy reading about Captain Lancaster. 'Stormy Bill,' they called him, and his name was known in every seaport from Boston to Singapore."

Judson Wyman and his father gazed at the fragile little man who looked as if a breath of wind might blow him away like a withered leaf. He was the ghost of a greatly heroic and thrilling past, surviving long beyond his vanished era. It would have been no more amazing if one of those lovely clippers of his had come foaming in past Sandy Hook with her studding-sails spread like mighty wings and half a hundred deep-sea bullies to sweat at the braces and swarm out on the lofty yards.

"I am a very old man," sighed Captain Lancaster, and his hand went out to Judson for support as they moved slowly along the campus path. He became

silent and lost in his own misty dreams while Spencer Torrance explained in reply to the wonder written on the faces of the others:

"The sea is my hobby, you know. It is really more than that. I am no sailor, of course, but for several years all my spare time has been spent in collecting the material and writing a history of the old American merchant marine. I come of seafaring stock. And you can understand that finding Captain 'Stormy Bill' Lancaster actually alive and in the flesh is a tremendous event for me."

"It seems funny that he was lost track of," said Judson.

"I found no mention of him as still on earth, and I took it for granted that he must have slipped his cable long ago. I have had to do my work in libraries, you see."

"Slipped his cable, eh?" spoke up Captain Lancaster. "Not quite, but it is paid out to the last link and no holding ground. Excitement may be bad for me, but I propose to make a day of it with you, Torrance, my lad. There was nobody back home that I could talk to about my kind of ships and sailors."

Safely arrived at the Wyman house, the master of the *Flying Cloud* dozed for a little while among the cushions of a big armchair and then insisted on joining the family at dinner. He was, indeed, like a candle that flames up fitfully before it finally expires. When aroused he was as alert as a man forty years younger, and no matter how greatly fatigue bur-

dened him, he never quite lost that suggestion of taut, efficient courage and energy which had made him supreme upon a quarterdeck.

After dinner Spencer Torrance sat down at the tinkling old piano in the parlor and began to sing the sailors' songs that are heard no more, the chanteys of blue water as they used to roar them in lusty chorus when they walked the capstan round or sheeted the topsails home.

Torrance knew them every one by heart, and as he swung into one refrain after another, Captain William Lancaster beat time with his cane and his thin voice made a duet of it. Presently Judson and his father were singing with them. They simply could n't help catching the swing of these haunting melodies, and the house reëchoed the strains of:

"Oh, don't you hear our old man say
We're homeward bound this very day?

"Our anchor's aweigh and our sails they are set,
And the girls we are leaving we leave with regret.

"She is a flash clipper and bound for to go;
With the girls on her tow-rope she cannot say nó.

"So fare you well, I wish you well,
Good-bye, fare you well,
Good-bye, fare you well!
Oh, fare you well, my bonny young girls,
Hurrah, my boys, we're homeward bound!"

And when the scholarly young man at the piano paused to rest his nimble fingers, the ancient mariner thought of another one and his white head

nodded to the measures of the tune as he piped up all by himself:

"Oh, the times are hard and the wages low,
Leave her, bullies, leave her.
I guess it's time for us to go,
It's time for us to leave her."

For young Wyman it was a memorable afternoon. For the first time in his life he had glimpses of the magic and the mystery of the deep sea. It was made alive to him as Spencer Torrance, all aglow with his theme, painted in words one picture after another of the earlier race of American mariners who had fought pirates and privateers to carry the starry ensign into the remotest harbors of the Seven Seas, how they had boldly challenged the powerful East India Company in the waters of the Orient, how on the boisterous Atlantic, or the Western Ocean as they called it, England's supremacy had been wrested from her, and how the gold rush to California that began in '49 had created the matchless fleets of clippers which won for Yankee seamen the blue ribbon of the world's merchant shipping.

"I never dreamed you knew stuff like this, Mr. Torrance," blurted Judson. "Whew, I wish you had loosened up to me."

"I wanted to," smiled the instructor, who no longer seemed dry and bookish and sissified. "I had an idea that I might interest you when I called that night. But you thought me frightfully stupid company."

"Judson is all right," suddenly observed Captain

William Lancaster. "He needs to be waked up. He has just been drifting to leeward. Tell him some more, Torrance."

"If you are not too tired, Captain — why not spin us a yarn?"

The great-grandfather gazed into space and began to talk, quite softly, with quiet, brooding intervals. They were not so much stories as vivid bits, like snap-shots, that fairly leaped out of the remote past and made it live again. Spencer Torrance had talked history. The shipmaster of long ago introduced them to the company of the men of his own kind who had made history, simple, courageous men who had suffered without complaint and dared without boasting. Some of them had been lost in ships that were missing with all hands, others had endured the horrors of famine in open boats, but no matter how cruelly the sea might use them they had been faithful to the end. Many of them had been astonishingly young men, masters of foreign-bound ships while in their early twenties, asking neither odds nor favors, standing upon their own two feet and earning their way up the ladder of promotion.

It was all new to Judson Wyman, and he drank it in with eager interest and a quickened pulse. Perhaps the blood of seafaring ancestors stirred in him for the first time. When Captain William Lancaster subsided into one of those silent spells of his and sagged farther down in the armchair, Spencer Torrance carried on the tale to the tragic decline and end of the era of Yankee ships and sailors and the

passing of the Stars and Stripes from blue water. It may have been the weakness of age that caused a salt tear to trickle down the wrinkled cheek of the aged shipmaster, or perhaps he was thinking more of the friends he had known and sailed with in that departed merchant marine, of the comrades of the winds that tramped the world.

Captain Lancaster opened his eyes and sat bolt upright, however, when Torrance exclaimed, with vigorous gesture:

"It is all right to sigh for the brave old days, but we can't bring them back. We younger men must live in the present. Just think what a wonderful thing is happening! Our country built a mighty fleet of ships to serve the needs of the Great War, to bridge the Atlantic for the army of two million men that we sent to France. And now these fine steamers are carrying cargoes on every sea, and under the American flag, by Jove. As an accident of war, we have a tremendous merchant marine again, and we are going to keep it. Columbia has returned to the ocean."

"Right you are, my boy," cried Captain "Bill" Lancaster, "and the foreigners are n't going to drive us ashore. Lord, but I wish I was a youngster again. Right now there is a better chance to climb ahead in steam than ever there was in sail. Nothing can stop the lad with the right stuff in him."

Spencer Torrance left them soon after this, and Judson walked as far as the campus with him. The boy of the prairie country was already yearning for

the sight of salt water. He was eager to learn more about this new career for a lad with the right stuff in him. He had been blundering along without any fixed purpose, ambitious to make good, but as aimless as a ship without a rudder. There was a wistful note in his voice as he said:

"You certainly got me going this afternoon, Mr. Torrance. I don't see how in the world I can leave home, with Dad more or less ditched and Captain Lancaster on our hands. What kind of wages can a fellow earn on a ship, what you would call a greenhorn?"

"A chap like you ought to go through the training service that Uncle Sam provides, Judson. The Shipping Board is looking for clean, manly young Americans who will stick to the game. There is n't much in it for a while, of course, not nearly as much as you are earning now, but you can hope to be an officer in a year or so."

"And what would my folks do in the meanwhile?" rather sadly replied Judson. "It sounds like great stuff and I ate up every word of it, but I guess I will have to stick to the quarterdeck of a lumber wagon."

"Where there 's a will, there 's a way," confidently exclaimed Torrance. "I wish I could go to sea myself, but finances stand in the way, and, besides, I am not rugged enough to sign on in the forecastle. And so I dream and write and talk about it. Drop around to my room when you have nothing better to do, and don't give up the ship."

For several days thereafter, Captain Lancaster

told no more old tales of the sea. The long journey and the excitement of new scenes and faces had taxed his flickering vitality, and he was content to stay in bed until noon and then sit by a window or walk as far as Mr. Wyman's office next door. The western landscape held a fascination for him as he gazed out across the miles of prairie wheat-fields which reminded him of the sea. His mind was too active to be thinking of nothing and, more shrewdly than the family suspected, he was taking stock of them and their circumstances. At length he said to Judson, in his abrupt way:

"Ask your mother to come in. Never mind Horace. He will do as we say. I think a good deal of your dad, but there is n't spunk enough in him to start a family mutiny."

No sooner had Mrs. Wyman answered the summons than her surprising grandfather began to laugh. His merriment was so hearty that his false teeth clicked and he had to stop before they went adrift. Judson's mother, who had coddled and petted him like a baby, was afraid he had lost his wits, and she stood a speechless image of dismay until he wound up with a fit of coughing and then exclaimed:

"Sit down, Annie. The joke is on you, bless your heart. Did your sister Caroline put it into your head that I was a stranded old derelict with no visible means of support? I'm sure she did n't mean to steer you wrong."

"She wrote that she had been taking care of you," answered Mrs. Wyman, reassured, but still a trifle

nervous. "We were glad to take our turn, of course."

"I lived with her," said the old gentleman. "That is what she meant. It was pleasanter for me than berthing with strangers. But she had no reason to regret it. You sort of jumped at a conclusion, Annie, child, and I love you for it. Took you more aback than ever, did n't it, when you saw me so smartly turned out — good clothes and all that? Expected you would have to provide the same kind of gear for me?"

"We planned to do the very best we could for you," answered his warm-hearted granddaughter.

"I saw all that. Well, Annie, I took a notion that I wanted to get acquainted with you and your family, and I always propose to do pretty much as I please as long as my old hulk stays afloat. I guess you would n't set me down as a pauper, taking it by and large. You see, I had invested my savings in shares of sailing vessels — in pieces of big down-east schooners that steam had n't driven out of the coastwise trade. Some folks called me a fool, but what else would an old shellback naturally do with his money? It was safer at sea than ashore, in my antiquated opinion. For a good many years dividends were slim and seldom, but I held on to the vessels.

"Then came this hellish war in Europe and shipping was scarce and mighty valuable. Steamers were sunk so fast and they needed so many of 'em that the big Yankee schooners, five- and six-masters, went into the offshore trade, to Africa, South Amer-

ica, and the Mediterranean. Freights soared higher than a skysail yard. It was simply scandalous."

"And you made some money," politely observed Judson, thinking to humor the skipper and knowing nothing whatever about the matter in question.

"Yes, I cleaned up," chuckled Captain William Lancaster. "The figgers are all in my head. The pieces I owned in these six wallopin' big schooners amounted to twenty-seven thousand dollars as their book value stood just before war broke loose in 1914. They paid me thirty-one thousand dollars in dividends in 1917, and the next year was almost as good. They were still going strong, but I believe in selling at the top of the market, and so I let 'em go when I was offered a hundred thousand flat to close out. Sometimes I don't believe I am in my dotage after all. I guess I can pay my way, Annie."

"You don't have to, Captain William," exclaimed Mrs. Wyman, as happy in his good fortune as though it had come to her. Judson was speechless.

"And you mean it when you say it, Annie," earnestly returned the old gentleman. "I have n't sized you folks up wrong. Now I can't afford to fiddle around and waste time. Every night that I crawl in bed is a riskier voyage than ever I sailed at sea. It is God's own mercy that my worn-out clock did n't stop long ago. I have been looking things over, and my opinion is that the Wyman family needs to be taken in hand. This strapping boy of yours will do better afloat than ashore. He can get his diploma in old Neptune's college even if he was

kind of scuppered here at Follansbee. Young Torrance speaks highly of him, and that is worth something."

"But my duty is to stand by the family," protested Judson. "They need me. That is why I passed up college."

"Silence on deck," scolded the deep-water tyrant. "I never stood any back-talk from foremast hands. You will take your sailing orders, Judson Wyman."

"Aye, aye, sir," respectfully replied the six-foot youth.

"I am ready to strike a bargain," resumed Captain William, as he addressed himself to Mrs. Wyman. "That husband of yours means well, Annie, and he is no blockhead. But hard luck has stood him on his beam ends so often that he expects to be licked. What he needs is a fair wind. Put him in a handsome office in the new brick block on Main Street, give him a new automobile and some good clothes and a bank account, and you'll see something doing in real estate and insurance. He knows the business and people like him. Life has always been a stern chase with him. Give him a flying start and he can outfoot some of these snappy young hustlers that lack the ballast of judgment and experience."

"But that sounds as if we were objects of charity," cried Mrs. Wyman, while Judson glowered his disapproval.

"Nonsense! I'm talking about a partnership. I propose to back Horace Wyman as an investment. Was I a doddering old idiot when I kept my money

in the big schooners? There is a string tied to this arrangement. Judson steers for salt water right away and learns the trade of seafaring in steam. When I fail to wake up some morning, it will be a comfort to know that a fine young lubber of a great-grandson of mine is on the road to the command of a Yankee ship."

"You don't have to bully me into it," said Judson. "How about it, mother?"

"To lose you from home? It is very hard for me to face, but I shall never stand in your way," she told him, hiding the anguish in her heart.

"You run true to the old stock, Annie," exclaimed Captain William. "We always took our punishment without whimpering. Well, that's settled all shipshape. Horace and I will draw up articles this afternoon, with a lawyer to lend a hand. Run over and see young Torrance, Judson, and he will tell you how to get into this new-fangled merchant marine. He knows all the ropes."

Judson grabbed his hat and made for the door on the run, but the old man detained him to say:

"One word more. Maybe my advice is worth listening to. Ships are different now, but the sea is the same. And men average about alike, whether they went offshore in a wind-jammer in my time, or go in a steam kettle in yours. There is a lot of brag and bluster and cowardice in business ashore, Judson, but you can't bluff the eternal sea. You will stand or fall on your merits as a man and a sailor. I felt hopeful about you when Torrance told me about

your defying college opinion on the football field and playing it lone-handed just because you saw where your duty lay. A shipmaster runs up against things like that when there is nobody else to turn to, and they make him or break him."

Forty-eight hours later, Judson Wyman was at the railroad station bound to the recruiting office of the United States Shipping Board in Minneapolis. His mother had kissed him good-bye at the house, with a brave smile and prayers unspoken. She dared not let herself wonder how long it might be before her bonny sailor lad should find the long road home. Captain William Lancaster was resting his old bones in bed, "snugged down under easy canvas," he called it, and as Judson clasped the corded, bloodless hand, the last captain of a Yankee clipper aroused himself to say, with a spark of that indomitable resolution of his:

"Learn your trade on the Western Ocean, my boy. She is a rough teacher and she will use you hard, but that's where they make sailor men."

Mr. Horace Wyman was already like another man because of the faith in him which the generous partnership had revealed. He was confident of his own future. An air of self-reliance had dispelled the impression of forlorn discouragement which he had conveyed, and the father and son could feel pride in each other as they stood waiting for the eastbound train.

"I am going to make good, Jud, for your sake, as part of the bargain," said the older man.

"I am sure of it, Dad. It's a cinch," smiled the younger. "And I'll try not to disgrace the family. Things have been coming so fast that my wits are kind of scrambled, but I think this is the right job for me, and it looks as if there was more than one kind of an education."

Spencer Torrance was on hand, of course, and he had a book of sea ballads under his arm. It was easy to perceive that he would have given ten years of his life to be rugged enough to go with Judson and take the hard knocks of a sailor's life. His feelings were a bit too much for him, so he turned the pages of his precious volume and began to recite:

"There were ships that once I sailed in, sail and steam, and great and small.
And some were good and some were bad, but, Lord, I loved 'em all!
There were rusty-red old hookers going plugging round the world,
And Clyde-built China clippers with their splendid wings unfurled.
And all the winds of all the seas came singing down the street . . ."

The heavy express train came roaring toward the station, and Spencer Torrance turned to shake hands with Judson, who shouted to make himself heard:

"Maybe we shall be shipmates some day. You never can tell!"

## CHAPTER III

### HE MEETS A "HARD-BOILED GUY"

JUDSON WYMAN sat in the Minneapolis recruiting office of the United States Shipping Board, awaiting his turn to be enrolled. There were no other applicants just then, and he was absorbed in looking over the printed information which had been given him by the officer in charge. He was not in the least worried by the requirements, which stated that to enter the sea training service he had to be an American citizen, physically sound and of good character, at least eighteen years of age, and not less than five feet four inches in height and one hundred and forty pounds in weight. What interested him much more were such facts as these:

The young American who feels the call of the sea — the desire to voyage to distant shores, to mingle with strange peoples, to see his country's flag flying in far-off, busy ports — is wanted now in his country's new Merchant Marine.

We want to attract to the sea the kind of American boys that older men among us remember in their own school days — fine, ambitious boys who had good homes and left them amid the family discussion as to whether they should be bankers, insurance men, retail merchants, or what not. We want to attract to it, among others, boys who come from college and who know how to swim and play football. We want to make the conditions of sea-

faring such that they will think it the best career they can find.

We want to train them to be good seamen and then good officers — or good foreign representatives in commercial or industrial lines, and agents of steamship companies at home or abroad.

One look at the ruddy, deep-chested young recruit from North Dakota and the genial agent of Uncle Sam exclaimed as he came out of another room:

"Just the kind we are looking for! Step inside, if you please, Wyman. I will put you through the mill in a jiffy. How did you happen to think of signing up? Been reading some of our publicity stuff or did you get a taste of sea service during the War?"

"I was n't quite old enough to get in the Navy or anything else," replied Judson. "It was a salty old great-grandfather that chased me off to sea, and here I am, and I don't know one end of a ship from the other."

"Never mind that. The Navy gets its best men from among you corn-fed youngsters. A sailor does not have to be born with webfeet nowadays. Just fill out these blanks and sign your name and tell me who your folks are. You understand the conditions? The Government will pay you thirty dollars a month and take care of you and fit you out with clothing while you are in training. After that you will be able to ship as an ordinary seaman in an American steamer at sixty-five dollars a month. If you are a high-school graduate, you can try the examinations for a third officer's license at the end of a year of sea

duty. All we ask in return is that you promise to stay in the merchant service at least one year, and that you behave yourself and appreciate your opportunity."

"Thank you, sir," said Judson, who had learned from Captain William Lancaster to remember his manners when speaking to an officer. "And where do I go from here?"

"To Camp Stuart, at Newport News, Virginia. I can send you to-morrow morning. Four other recruits will be ready to shove off from here. I have nobody to put in charge, but they seem to be a steady lot of lads. I should like to have you keep an eye on them — see that they don't lose their railway tickets or go astray. You are big enough to knock their heads together if they start anything."

"If you put it up to me, sir, I'll deliver the bunch at Newport News or bust," said Judson in that grave slow voice of his.

"Right you are, then, and full speed ahead," was the cordial endorsement. "Feel at all homesick and wish you had n't?"

"You said it, sir. There's a prairie town called Follansbee that looks awful good to me."

"Glad to hear it, son. We don't want homeless vagabonds and drifters in these fine, new ships of ours. You will sing a different tune when you are a dandy mate and come back to show 'em the brass buttons."

When Judson Wyman returned to the office early next morning, he was interested in looking over the

four other recruits who were to go East with him. Two of them were city-bred fellows, as he read at a glance, and he soon learned that they had been attracted by the posters and newspaper articles. One had been a clerk in a shoe store, after finishing in high school. Two others had come from the farm and the ranch, impelled by the spirit of adventure. While they were getting acquainted, there breezed in an additional recruit who had been accepted at the last moment. He was very different from the rest of them, and Judson found him much more difficult to place at first glance.

This stranger was of a wiry build, and he moved with a quick, light tread. He seemed to be on his toes every minute, as the saying is, ready for whatever might happen. There was a certain boyishness in his ready smile and impulsive manner, but he was older than these other recruits. It was to be noted in the lean face which had acquired a kind of hardness. Those wary black eyes which were always so alert would have told you the same story. Here was a young man who, without doubt, had seen something of the world and was in the habit of watching his step. In the same room with him Judson Wyman looked awkward and clumsy and simple. It was a trifle odd to find him willing to take on as a seaman apprentice. With a friendly nod at Judson he crossed the floor to say:

"What, ho, shipmate? The boss tells me you're to chaperon the party. Is it a bum joke? You can't show me anything. What's the bright idea?"

"Those were the orders before you joined the outfit," coolly answered Judson, "and they still stand, as far as I know. Are you hunting for trouble?"

"Never! Not if I see it first," good-naturedly exclaimed the other. "I merely wanted to know. How 's crops, and will wheat go up or down? I just love to listen to small-town stuff."

"When a man gets too fresh in my town, somebody is liable to push his face for him. That is the only news that may interest you," deliberately remarked the youth from North Dakota, who had no intention of being made a fool of. If he had a rough customer to deal with on the long journey to the Atlantic coast, the sooner he found it out the better.

Cheerfully unabashed, the stranger apologized, with a careless gesture:

"Forget my foolish words. Anything to make conversation and break the ice. You and I will get on great. How about these other birds? Give me a line on them."

"They are all new to me," grouchily replied Judson, who had taken a dislike to this flippant person. "All I've noticed is that they know enough to mind their own business."

"Biff! Ouch! Right to the point of the jaw," gleefully cried the victim of this frank speech. "And I thought you were asleep on your feet. The wrong dope. Here is where I talk pretty. Allow me to introduce myself. Briscoe is the name — James E. — but I listen quicker when they call me 'Kid' Bris-

coe. Home address? Wherever I can find a peg to hang my hat on."

Just then the recruiting officer called them together and told them to pick up their bags. Obediently they followed him to the railroad station where that blithe young man of the world, Briscoe, James E., seemed to find more amusement in the final words of instruction. Nobody had to tell *him* how to find his way about. There was a trace of annoyance, however, on that bold lean face of his when the officer called Judson aside for a brief chat. It emphasized the fact that this stalwart, slow-spoken lad of the prairie had inspired a confidence which was denied the dashing "Kid" Briscoe.

"You will go through all right, Wyman," said the officer. "I knew the cut of *your* jib as soon as you walked into my office. These lads will give you no trouble, barring this hot sport that knows it all. And I guess you can handle him if you have to. I can't make him out, but he was raised in Minneapolis and he brought satisfactory references from people who knew him when he was a boy. If he tries to ride you, beat him to it. You have no official authority, of course, but you are big enough to enforce law and order without any credentials."

"Much obliged, sir. I'll do my best to deliver them right side up with care," Judson seriously assured him.

The long journey, so tiresome to most people, was an adventure for these young merchant seamen because it led to the rolling roads of a world that was

all new to them. During the first few hours "Kid" Briscoe made no trouble at all and was a most entertaining companion. He sat with Judson in the smoking-car and flattered him by declaring that the rest of the crowd were stupid young boobs. He now disclosed the fact that he had been in the Navy during the War, as a fireman in a coal-burning destroyer of the Brest flotilla that cruised in the Bay of Biscay. It had been a wild and stormy life, hunting submarines and being hunted, slamming through the winter seas far offshore to meet the troop convoys. Later he had been shifted to one of the hard-driven yachts of the "Suicide Fleet," the *Alcedo*, which was torpedoed and lost with a score of her crew. The explosion had fairly blown him overboard and he was picked off a bit of floating wreckage several hours later.

All this fascinated Judson; he felt a new respect for this rover and concluded that he might have been wrong in his first impressions. Later in the day, however, Briscoe became bored and restless. He sauntered through the train, stopping more than once in the car where he had left his bag. When he returned, it was to be noticed that his talk had taken a boastful turn and his laugh was boisterous. Judson smelled the liquor on his breath and uneasily wondered how much more of it there was in the hidden bottle. It was really no business of his unless Briscoe should make a rowdy of himself, but it looked as though there might be rough weather ahead.

After a third of these trips into the other car, the

thirsty young man was in a very confidential mood. He knew a regular guy when he saw one, said he, and his new buddy, "Jud" Wyman, was the kind that kept his mouth shut and never spilled anything. It was a glum buddy of a Judson that glowered out of the window while his talkative companion rambled on:

"The Navy treated me like a dog. There was n't a smarter man in the black gang, and I was feeding the coal to her when most of those left-footed, amateur gobs were seasick and useless. I like machinery and such, and I was good enough to earn my rating as a water-tender. They gave it me all right, and I'd have been a machinist in six months more. What did they do to me? Gave me a dishonorable discharge and kicked me out of this man's Navy. What for? Oh, just for overstayin' liberty when I hit the beach at Brest and Bordeaux, and maybe I did fetch a few bottles of the old cognac aboard with me."

"You had it coming to you," observed Judson, with no sympathy whatever. "So that's why you did n't mention your Navy record to the merchant marine recruiting office."

"Sure thing! They won't bother to look it up. I'm not so crazy about this going to sea again, but I was in a hurry to leave town yesterday. I can trust you like a big brother, Jud, old top, and this was no fault of mine, on the level. I've been driving a limousine for a crusty old gent in St. Paul. Believe me, I can chauffeur anything with an engine in it. The old boy goes away for a week, understand, and I take

the bus out for a quiet little evening spin with a party of my friends. No great harm in that, was there? They all do it. Anyhow, there was too much oil on the road and I flew off on a sharp turn and the ten-thousand-dollar cab wrapped herself around a telephone pole. It was some collision. Nobody killed, but I knew the climate would be unhealthy for me when the owner looked the mess over. He is the original human crab. His temper is that nasty that he would have had me pinched. Now what do you think of that? Excuse me for a minute, Jud. I'll come right back. I wish I had a brother exactly like you."

This time "Kid" Briscoe brought the flask back with him from the other car, feeling generous enough to throw caution to the winds. Slipping into the empty seat behind Judson, he hauled the flask out from under his coat as he leaned forward to say:

"Duck down and take a gurgle of the old juice. Seven dollars a pint it cost me. Is that a proof of true friendship?"

The window had been opened to let the crisp October wind drive into the stuffy smoking-car. Judson turned, and it seemed like a clumsy accident as his elbow struck the flask and sent it spinning out through the window. He pretended to be sorry, but his grin betrayed him. He was not always slow-witted. Briscoe would be unable to buy any more of the miserable stuff during the journey. The four other recruits had been diverting themselves with an innocent game of cards, but they looked up now and edged

into the aisle, for "Kid" Briscoe's voice was loud and ugly as he said to Judson Wyman:

"You meant to do it, you big tramp. You can't pull any of this sea bully stuff on me. It stops right here. You're up against a hard-boiled guy. Get that? And you'll pay me the price of that good booze you wasted."

Briscoe was unafraid of Judson's height and brawn, this was evident. Rough-and-tumble fights afloat and ashore had made him a wicked opponent, but it was also easy to see that the four recruits in the aisle would have been delighted to assist Judson in enforcing law and order. Their sentiments were unanimous. The odds were heavily against the hard-boiled guy. Ignoring his demand for payment, Judson Wyman let his two large hands fall upon the shoulders of the aggrieved Briscoe and literally rammed him down into the seat.

"There, now, you subside and sober up," exclaimed the guardian of morals. "If there is any more whiskey in your bag, I'll waste that, too."

"You lose. I was too near broke to buy any more," replied "Kid" Briscoe, with a laugh.

He knew when discretion was the better part of valor. There would be better chances than this to square accounts with the meddlesome farmer who was due for a fall. Pulling his hat over his eyes, he remained slumped in the seat where Judson had so firmly placed him and presently fell asleep. He was not so talkative when he awoke and showed no inclination to confide more details of his hectic past

to his trusted buddy. His uneasy manner showed that he regretted telling so much, but Judson intended to keep the information to himself. In his simple code of honor there was no reason why a man should blab on another.

There was a little trouble next day when "Kid" Briscoe, by way of picking up a few dollars, tried to interest the four recruits in a poker game. It looked so much like stealing candy from children that Judson rudely interfered and laid down the law that gambling was strictly forbidden. Briscoe abused him, but was careful to avoid insults and soon recovered his good-humor. After this episode he addressed the autocratic Judson as "the bucko mate" and made the best of it. More or less of a blackguard, with an unlovely record, there was an engaging streak in the hard-boiled guy, and Judson could not wholly dislike him. In a tight pinch, he could be imagined as a courageous shipmate ready to risk his life for others.

Their own vast inland empire of the West seemed far away and forgotten when these youthful pilgrims reached Norfolk and boarded a steamer for the trip down the crowded harbor to Newport News. Here were ships from every sea. They revealed themselves in one stirring picture after another, far down the wide, historic reaches of Hampton Roads and in the seaward channels beyond where nodding buoys and squat, spider-legged lighthouses guided the mariner by day and night. Cargo steamers rode at anchor on either side of the fairway, swinging to

the tide by the dozen and the score while they waited their turns to fill their bunkers at the immense coaling piers which rattled and roared incessantly.

Many of these deep-sea freighters were salt-stained and rusty, but it seemed far-fetched to say that they suggested the romance of blue water. They were not ships, but uncouth, blunt-nosed steel troughs with engines in them and stumpy derricks instead of masts. And yet they had wallowed through the gales of the North Atlantic or gone rolling down to Rio, and their funnels had lifted in strange and distant ports. They had kicked along with the monsoons to help shove them home and the trade winds had piped through their stays. They flew the flags of many nations, but the "red duster" of the British merchant marine was no longer predominant. Another ensign flamed bright wherever the eye happened to turn and it bore the Stars and Stripes.

It rippled from the sterns of steamers berthed among the wharves and out in the stream. Most of them were new and freshly painted. They had lately slipped from the launching ways of shipyards in the Delaware, at Newport News, at San Francisco and Seattle, and already they and their sister ships of this mighty merchant fleet had carried cargoes to corners of the earth which had not seen the American flag in a generation. One of them was steaming out, deep-laden, and it may have been bound to Bombay or Nagasaki. Its whistle sounded a farewell. The sonorous, vibrant notes made Judson Wyman tingle

right down to his heels. It called to him in the language of the sea.

Farther down the widening river, the tall and slender masts of several square-rigged vessels were penciled against the green shore. There they were, the stately sailing ships of other days, the yards and rigging soaring in a complex and delicate tracery, the tiny figures of the sailors as they moved along the foot-ropes and loosed the canvas from the gaskets. It came as a surprise to Judson, who had taken it for granted that such ships as these had vanished with the era of his briny old great-grandfather, Captain William Lancaster. The sight of them cast a spell over the lad who had been so strongly moved by the great tales of the packet and the clipper, but he was brought to himself by the careless voice of "Kid" Briscoe.

"God never made anything prettier to look at. I'm sailor enough to say that much. British and Norwegian steel barks mostly, and high freights will keep 'em going a little longer. But they are back numbers. Too bad."

Judson was silent. His thoughts had turned back to the *Flying Cloud* and the chantey choruses of the Western Ocean. But as he gazed again at the trim steamers which filled the foreground of this modern maritime panorama and realized that they were carrying on the brave and enterprising traditions of Yankee ships and sailors, he mourned no more for the romantic past, but felt eager to play a part in this great new age of the sea. It was alive all about him,

and he knew in his heart that he had made the right choice. That sluggish indecision which had hampered him in college was like an unhappy dream.

When the ferry steamer landed the recruits at Newport News, a brisk young man in the blue uniform of a petty officer was waiting with a motor-bus to take them out to Camp Stuart. As they passed another wharf, he pointed to a spick-and-span gray steamer and said:

"One of our training ships, the *Albacore*, just in from Cuba and Haiti. The boys will be ashore this afternoon and she will take a new crowd on. You will have to wait for the next cruise. Another steamer is due in a couple of weeks."

The boys were, indeed, aboard the *Albacore*. They seemed to be swarming all over her, active figures in white working clothes who were adding the last touches of painting and polishing and scrubbing before they shifted into "liberty blues" and freedom ashore. Even at a distance they looked sunbrowned and wind-reddened after six weeks of a tropical voyage. Then the warehouses hid the *Albacore* from sight, but Judson liked this first little glimpse of Uncle Sam's fatherly sea training service.

The motor-bus swung away from the waterfront of Newport News and the groups of sailors and bluejackets who loafed on the streets, and passed into a vast, deserted army cantonment of hundreds of shabby wooden barrack buildings and mess halls. It was like an empty city fast going to decay. From this embarkation camp the regiments and divisions

of American troops had been hurried into the transports that bridged the sea to France. In one corner of the huge enclosure, where the tide washed a sandy beach, was a group of more substantial buildings, cement walled, and lawns and driveways trimly kept. And over them flew the flag of the United States Shipping Board.

To Judson Wyman it seemed as though, during the next few hours, he was being put through a machine which operated with no waste motion whatever. It was all done with courtesy and kindness, but he was soon convinced that Camp Stuart was a pleasant place for a lad who did his duty and disagreeable for those who shirked it. There was none of the rigid compulsion of the Navy routine because these recruits were not bound by an oath of enlistment, but they were made to feel under obligation to play the game as sailors and gentlemen.

Judson was examined and ticketed and passed along from one room to another, until he finally emerged with a full outfit of clothing under his arm. Then he was steered to the dormitory where he was assigned a cot and a locker by a gruff old retired mariner who had his hands full in seeing that a hundred skylarking lads were safely tucked in bed every night. If you had asked him, he would have probably told you that he felt safer at sea. Two or three other batches of recruits had just arrived, and they were all mustered to listen to an informal lecture by an instructor in seamanship who had served many years in the Navy and the merchant marine. The

substance of it was that they were sure to get on all right if they worked hard and behaved themselves. Then he dismissed them for the afternoon to wander about and learn the ropes and get accustomed to their blue shirts, wide-bottomed trousers and pancake caps and double-breasted coats. At least, they looked like sailormen.

Jud Wyman had enjoyed it all until he changed his clothes and got into his uniform. Then he had made a tragic discovery. His pocketbook was missing from the inside pocket of his coat. It had been there when he arrived in Norfolk, he was sure of that, and there had been no occasion to take it out on the ferry steamer. He was absolutely certain that it could not have fallen out by accident. The loss was quite serious, for, at the last moment before leaving home, old Captain William Lancaster had pulled a prodigious roll of bills out from under his pillow and peeled off two fifty-dollar notes as his parting gift. There had been no time to change it into a bank check or money order for safety's sake.

There had been also a modest sum which Judson's father had given him for expenses and incidentals until he should begin to draw his wages as an apprentice seaman. It was a heavy loss and it left the luckless youth almost without a penny. Sending home for more money was totally out of the question. Pride stood in the way. He could not bear to confess that he was unfit to look after himself. Painfully he endeavored to piece together some theory of how the misfortune could have happened. There had

been no crowd on the ferry to jostle him and offer a chance for the agile fingers of a pickpocket. He had stood at the rail to look at the ships, all the way down to Newport News. And "Kid" Briscoe had stood beside him, talkative as usual and drawing his attention to this vessel and that.

Judson scowled and thought of something else. Briscoe had sat on the same bench when they were changing into their uniforms, but he had made swifter work of it and was gone outdoors before Judson picked up the discarded coat to look for his pocketbook. It seemed dirty work to suspect a shipmate, but his own statements had convicted "Kid" Briscoe of a career more or less shady and a lack of scruples. A dishonorable discharge from the Navy and that affair of the costly limousine which he had temporarily stolen for a joy-ride in St. Paul were not apt to encourage one's belief in his integrity. Judson had a notion that he might have learned of more escapades if the whiskey flask had not been nudged out of the car window.

The hard-boiled guy had enlisted in the merchant marine in order to get under cover. This was his own admission. It had been Judson's shrewd guess that he had mighty little intention of serving his time in the training service if he saw a favorable chance to get out of it. A fellow of his experience could sign on in a ship at first-class wages whenever he liked. And now that Judson had seen a lot of these lads together at Camp Stuart, most of them clean and fresh and in their teens, his own kind of

folks, it seemed even more incongruous to find "Kid" Briscoe among them. There was no serious penalty for desertion, and possibly Briscoe had planned to get a trip to the Atlantic seaboard at the Government's expense, stay at the camp a while, and then vanish just before the training cruise. He was short of cash, or so he had told Judson, and it was any port in a storm.

All this was no more than guesswork, entirely too flimsy to warrant accusing the entertaining hard-boiled guy of such a contemptible trick as stealing a comrade's pocketbook. And yet Judson could not rid himself of the suspicion. He moped by himself while the other lads were eagerly roaming all over the place and talking nautical lingo with the boys who had just returned from sea and were regarded as seasoned shellbacks. It was curious that "Kid" Briscoe seemed to be keeping out of the way. At any rate, he let Judson alone and ate his supper at one of the other tables in the long mess hall.

There was no rule to prevent the boys from going downtown when they were off watch, providing they reported back in camp by ten o'clock at night. Shortly after supper, Judson saw Briscoe saunter toward the main gate and pass the master-at-arms who was in charge of the police force. It was openly done, without the slightest air of sneaking away, and Judson could see nothing really wrong in the evening's excursion, but it somehow made him feel more uneasy. He drifted down to the beach in front

of the camp and moodily watched the lights of the moving ships as they gleamed white and green and red in the autumn dusk.

In his dogged fashion he continued to think the problem over, low-spirited at losing all his money and angry that he should have been picked as a soft mark. After an hour or so he felt a strong impulse to follow the reckless "Kid" Briscoe into Newport News and try to find him. He was the kind to fling money about when he had it, and the hundred dollars and more in the pocketbook would be a case of easy come, easy go. If he had been actually guilty of the theft, he was probably leaving a lively trail in Newport News.

The disturbing thought occurred to Judson that Briscoe was likely to round up a few hard-boiled companions from among the sailors ashore. This made the errand look a bit squally, for they would be only too glad of an excuse to start a ruction. And this time the odds were very much against the lone-handed Jud Wyman. But he had never shirked a job because it was hard, and with that square chin of his set rather grimly, he marched up to the main gate and gave his name to the master-at-arms as out on liberty until ten o'clock.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE *ROANOKE* STEERS SOUTH

THE chief business thoroughfare of Newport News was brightly lighted, and although there were many attractive stores, the most notable activity seemed to be in the line of motion-picture theaters, restaurants and lunch-rooms, pool parlors, and soft-drink resorts. It was pleasing to see this harmless kind of entertainment offered the floating population of seafaring men instead of the filthy saloons which used to make all seaports a shame and disgrace. Judson Wyman almost forgot his troubles as he drifted with the crowd and looked curiously at the groups of sailors of many races and climes, trim little slant-eyed bluejackets from a Japanese cruiser, turbaned Lascars off a freighter coaling for Calcutta, noisy negroes from the big Yankee schooners that waited for a fair wind, ruddy Norwegians, Italians with gold earrings, and spruce blue-clad young mates of the British merchant service.

Nothing was to be seen of the flighty "Kid" Briscoe, and it looked like a wild-goose chase, but when Judson once got hold of an idea he hated to let go of it. He therefore idled at the street corners until the evening was drawing toward ten o'clock, and then he realized that Briscoe might have returned to Camp Stuart ahead of him. About to

jump on a trolley car, Judson dodged to avoid an automobile which swung in to halt at the curb a little way beyond. A glimpse of a black-haired young man in the uniform of the training service who sat beside the driver, and Judson delayed to watch the proceedings. If he had not caught sight of "Kid" Briscoe, he would have known that boisterous laugh anywhere.

At least a half-dozen other young men hopped out of the hired automobile and surrounded the open-handed Briscoe, who insisted on paying the driver from a crumpled wad of money which he fished out with the careless air of a prodigal son. Two of these guests of his were in Navy clothes and the others had the cut of sea rovers. Briscoe steered them into a restaurant and Judson heard him say:

"You'll pay nothing to-night. Get me? This is my party. Was n't I lucky to run across you two gobs that were torpedoed with me in the war zone? And when I pick up easy money, I just naturally have to blow it. Camp Stuart at ten o'clock? Nix on that kid stuff. I'll roll out there when I get good and ready."

He was holding the restaurant door open as they trooped in past him, and this gave Judson Wyman the opportunity to step forward and exclaim:

"Tell your friends to wait, Briscoe. Too bad to spoil the party, but I think you had better walk around the corner with me."

"Well, look who's here," was the genial response. "The young armored cruiser from North Dakota.

Shove in, buddy, shove in, and I'll break out a broiled lobster for you. Why this round-the-corner mystery? Have you dug up a bottle of the old joy-juice? No such luck for me."

"I am glad to find you sober," said the unsmiling Judson as he gripped the arm of the hard-boiled guy and firmly escorted him in the direction of the shadowy side-street only a few feet distant. Briscoe decided to humor the whim of this serious youth, and called to his friends inside the restaurant to order a supper and go as far as they liked. At the corner he twisted himself out of Judson's grasp and hotly exclaimed:

"What's the answer? I'm liable to lose my temper and knock your silly block off some day."

"Tell me where you got the money to burn in this style," said Judson, going straight to the point.

"What business is it of yours?" sneered "Kid" Briscoe, showing his ugly streak. "I stood a lot of foolishness from you coming East, just because you were a big, green baby that did n't know any better. Cut it out, Wyman, or you 'll get bumped."

"Where did you get all the money?" persisted Judson.

"Won it shooting craps with a bunch of sailors," answered Briscoe, and he stood poised for action. "Went in with a five-dollar note and came out with a bundle. Now will you be good?"

"You took it out of my pocketbook, you crook," declared the stubborn Judson. "And I am going to have you locked up."

"You're a liar!" cried "Kid" Briscoe, and with the words he let drive a hard fist that landed on Judson's cheek and made his teeth rattle. It seemed like a rash attack, for the young giant from the prairie had all the advantage of height and weight and brawn, but football skill was one thing and the art of fighting quite another. Before he could launch a blow with that mighty right arm of his, another swift swing, sent home with skill and power, rocked his head back and made him see stars. "Kid" Briscoe had failed to mention the fact that as the best middle-weight boxer in the American destroyer flotilla he had won the decision against the British Navy champion in a ten-round bout.

Poor Judson could have been no more surprised if he had been kicked in the face by a mule. Dazed and dismayed for the moment, he stood his ground and earnestly tried to knock the agile Briscoe into the middle of next week, but his blows failed to land on the target. The seasoned middle-weight champion ducked and side-stepped and grinned and was most provokingly somewhere else. It was his amiable intention to end the argument by putting his rugged foeman to sleep with a jolt on the chin, but Judson was getting wider awake all the time. So far as the industrious Briscoe was able to judge, it was like hitting the side of a brick house.

"For the love of Mike, why don't you fall down?" grunted the hard-boiled guy as he put all his steam

into an upper-cut that closed Judson's good right eye. Very much out of training, Briscoe was getting short-winded. By way of answer, Judson rushed at him and they closed in an old-fashioned football clinch. Keeping one arm free, Judson whanged his opponent's ribs like a bass drum and pounded him behind the ear. It would have been almost as easy to escape from the arms of a grizzly bear.

Just then the party of impatient guests came boiling out of the restaurant, anxious to discover what had become of the man with the money. At the joyous spectacle of a fight, they swarmed in and pried the foemen apart. Briscoe turned to say to them:

"Leave it to me to finish him off, boys. He was looking for it."

They assented to this, and the luckless Judson, groggy, disgusted, and humiliated, had the one ray of comfort that this crowd would see fair play instead of brutally handling him. He was by no means whipped, for there was no limit to his physical endurance and stolid pluck. "Kid" Briscoe's science could not overcome his own ebbing energy. His punches had begun to lose their force, and it was not so easy to avoid those ponderous fists which, although wild and clumsy, had Judson's hundred and eighty pounds of solid bulk behind them. All concerned were too intent to keep watch until a lanky policeman broke through the ring, tapped the gladiators with his hardwood club and remarked, in his soft Virginia drawl:

"I reckon you-all had better quit that. I'll have to tote you along to the calaboose. You sailors ain't been behavin' nice at all in Newport News an' these yere shindys has got to stop."

Judson Wyman was speechless. This hateful situation was his own fault and he had brought public disgrace upon himself. Sadly he gazed out of his one open eye at the dread figure of the policeman and had no thought of resistance. "Kid" Briscoe, on the contrary, was not in the least embarrassed and proceeded to argue the matter with tact and ready wit while he rubbed a lump behind his right ear. It was merely a dispute between friends, said he, and they were apprentices from Camp Stuart who would be sent home to their broken-hearted parents if they got in trouble with the police. The other young men of the party, who were all sober and respectable, put in their pleas, and the easy-going officer showed signs of relenting.

Just then there charged into the group a snappy, well-set-up man with the red bars of a chief petty officer on his sleeve. Alas, Judson recognized him as the master-at-arms from Camp Stuart. Shoving the two offenders toward the lighted corner, he briskly exclaimed:

"Let me have a look at you. New recruits, eh? Came in to-day and got in a scrap and overstayed your liberty as soon as you hit the beach. Better turn them over to me, had n't you, Mister Policeman?"

"Reckon I might as well," was the reply. "You'll surely make 'em wish they had n't. I felt kind of sorry to put 'em in the pen."

"And I thought I could have a quiet night off to see my family," said the annoyed master-at-arms as he hailed a passing taxi. Judson Wyman went meekly and "Kid" Briscoe was subdued for once. The forces of law and order were coming too fast for him, and his Navy training had taught him to feel more respect for a master-at-arms than for a dozen policemen. When questioned, Judson had nothing to say, and his foeman merely explained that no man could call him a liar and get away with it.

As the taxi rattled through the gate of the camp, Briscoe leaned over to whisper in his battered companion's ear:

"On the level, Jud, you were all wrong. I did win that money rollin' dice."

The master-at-arms stowed them for safe-keeping in a small building with barred windows which he called the brig, snapped the padlock, and bowled off in the taxi to finish that interrupted journey to his home in Newport News. "Kid" Briscoe stretched himself upon a hard bench, rolled up his coat for a pillow, and was soon snoring. He was a toughened philosopher whose favorite doctrine was, "It's a great life if you don't weaken." Judson Wyman sat with his aching head between his hands and bitterly reflected that matters could not possibly be worse. He had lost his money and his reputation, and, beyond doubt, his career in the merchant ma-

rine was blighted. He tried not to think of the folks in North Dakota.

He had not been long asleep when he was aroused from troubled dreams by the voice of "Kid" Briscoe, who was cheerily chatting with the apprentice from the steward's department who had brought in a slim breakfast of bread and water.

"Do they hang you from the yardarm or hand you a merry little sentence for life?" asked the hard-boiled guy.

"A week in the brig, most likely, unless the old man decides to chuck you two birds out as undesirable citizens," answered the apprentice. "Seems to me you got off to a poor start."

"You are a wise child. We did all of that, and then some," agreed Briscoe. He tried to enliven his fellow prisoner, but Judson was in a mood to be let severely alone. And he remained as dumb as an oyster until the master-at-arms sent two of his men to take them to headquarters. The case had been reported to the commander of the camp, Captain Waterman, and he concluded to give it a personal hearing. It impressed him as rather odd that two of his boys, perfectly sober according to the evidence, should have been fighting in the streets of Newport News, and he wished to get at the bottom of it.

When the culprits were led into the spacious office, they saw seated at the desk a handsome, elderly man with a white mustache and a fine color in his cheek. Although an American mariner of the old school, he was still competent and vigorous,

and there was nothing about him to suggest ghostly memories of vanished ships and sailors. His rank was indicated by the four gold sleeve-stripes and "Kid" Briscoe's hand flew to his cap in salute. Captain Waterman smiled at this, and there was no hardness in his voice as the two young men stood stiffly at attention in front of the desk.

"You have seen service? It leaves its stamp," he said to Briscoe. "You are in the engineers' department, I see. What were you in the Navy? A fireman?"

"I did n't say I had been in the Navy, sir," blurted Briscoe, looking flustered.

"You don't have to tell me. Never mind that. What made you pitch into young Wyman? I assume you hit him first."

"And how did you guess that, sir?"

"Just by sizing up the pair of you. He called you a liar? He must have felt fairly sure of it, for he is not a lad to go off half-cock."

"Kid" Briscoe rubbed his head and sheepishly stared at the floor. He was unwilling to admit that he had been called a thief. Captain Waterman, with a quizzical frown, turned to Judson and said:

"Tell me your side of it, Wyman. I should guess that you were slow to start and hard to stop."

"I honestly don't know, sir, whether I made a big blunder or not in — in what I said to Briscoe. I was quite sure of my facts when the row began, but he denies it and I want to play square."

"And neither of you will own up to the reason

that touched off the explosion?" queried Captain Waterman. "Step into the next room and wait, Briscoe."

When Judson was alone with him, the commander pulled at his white mustache and said in the most fatherly manner:

"I noticed you yesterday, Wyman, and remarked to my executive officer that here was the kind of lad we were trying to put into the merchant service. Please tell me something about yourself. I see by the records that you come from North Dakota."

"I have a great-grandfather who came out from Rockland, Maine, to visit us," explained Judson, feeling not quite so doleful. "And he sent me off to sea like a shot out of a gun. When he gives an order, it's all hands step lively. Perhaps you may have heard of him, sir, old Captain William Lancaster."

"What's that? 'Stormy Bill' Lancaster?" cried the commander, starting up in his chair. "Do you mean to say that the wonderful old snoozer had the grit to cruise out to your country at his age? Why, bless your heart, boy, I sailed with him forty-odd years ago when I was a youngster myself. I hail from Bath. And you are a great-grandson of his?"

"He will disown me after this," sighed Judson. "I don't dare to think of facing him."

"Oh, it's not so bad as that, Wyman. That gorgeous black eye which Briscoe gave you is part of your punishment, and you are manly enough to feel the disgrace of it all. I know you tell the truth.

You think it a low trick to shift all the blame to Briscoe, do you?"

"I'd rather give him the benefit of the doubt," insisted Judson.

"Well, I shall put you both on probation and restrict your liberty for a week," was the verdict. "Apparently you refuse to tell tales on a shipmate to save your own skin. Your great-grandfather would n't disown you for that. But just because he was a holy terror of a little rooster, with feet, fists, or belaying pins, you don't have to follow his example in that respect. Those were rough days at sea. You will find things very different."

With a thankful heart Judson passed out to join "Kid" Briscoe, who said, as they walked across the lawn:

"You still think I'm a crook, so you and I had better steer separate courses. But I can hand you this much — it was dead white of you to stand the gaff and keep your mouth shut about that stolen pocketbook stuff. It would have been a nasty charge to lay against me."

"I want to believe you," earnestly replied Judson. "But as long as this suspicion stands between us, I guess we can't be very chummy. Anyhow, I don't intend to queer the game for you. You start with a clean slate in the training service, as far as I am concerned. And there will be no stopping you if you behave yourself."

"Between you and that Captain Waterman I'll have no chance to fly the track," laughed Briscoe.

"He took just one slant at me and read the story of my life. A wise old sundowner, take it from me."

And then the orderly routine of the training service took hold of Judson Wyman and began to put him through the mill. He discovered that cleanliness was next to godliness, in the code of the sea, and that no fussy housekeeper ever scrubbed and painted and swept and polished so diligently as the men aboard a ship. This was evident in every corner of the buildings of Camp Stuart, from kitchen to dormitory, and the boys took their turns at this kind of duty when they were not in the classrooms or at lifeboat drill down beside the tidal river.

It was not intended to give them a thorough course of training in seamanship. Several hours daily Judson was in a classroom which smelled of tarred rope and looked like the deck of a ship. A boatswain showed the boys how to tie knots and the simpler splices, how to read the compass card and handle a dummy steering wheel. They studied the rules of the road at sea and the duties of a sailor, and learned to know buoys, lights, and what the deep-voiced whistles meant.

The purpose was to interest them in the mariner's trade, to shake a little discipline into them, to put them in touch with the sea so that when they went off on the training cruise it would not seem wholly strange and unfamiliar. What they learned in this brief schooling ashore was no more valuable, perhaps, than the contact with the officers in charge of them, firm and patient men who had served long

years afloat, who were in touch with the spirit of the new merchant marine and were proud of the traditions of the old. And from top to bottom of the training station was to be felt the shrewd and kindly personality of Captain Waterman, who had preferred this patriotic service to the command of a new, ten-thousand-ton steamer and double the salary.

New drafts of recruits came dribbling in until eighty-odd boys were impatiently awaiting word of the next training ship. Fair weather and a good run brought her into Newport News sooner than expected, and the jubilant apprentices were told to pack their sea bags and stand by for final inspection. With whoops of joy they piled into the motor-busses and started for the wharf with farewell cheers for Camp Stuart and Captain Waterman, who had passed down the line to shake the hand of every one of them.

Presently they were scrambling up the tall side of the wooden steamer *Roanoke*, one of the war-built fleet. She carried a small regular crew, men enough to handle her when necessary, but most of the work on deck and below was done by the boys in training. They were expected to earn their passage under the direction of mates and boatswains and assistant engineers who were so many vigilant schoolmasters. To be actually aboard a ship was such a novelty to many of the lads that they stared bewildered at the maze of derricks and ropes and blocks and boats and hatches and houses until rudely

ordered to "shake a leg." They were shown where their living quarters were, in the cargo space between decks, which had been fitted with a hundred bunks made of steel piping, with rows of lockers against the bulkheads. Like a flock of sheep they followed a grizzled boatswain, who showed them how to stow themselves and impressed them with the fact that an untidy, slovenly sailorman who failed to jump when he heard an order was headed straight for perdition.

Soon a bugle blew the rollicking call to supper, and the hungry young mariners trooped to the long, scrubbed tables which stood on the same deck, beneath the open hatches where the fresh air gushed in. There was good food and plenty of it, warranted to put beef on the ribs of the scrawniest apprentice. Judson Wyman had peeped into the galley, or ship's kitchen, on the deck above, and all the ideas gleaned from his great-grandfather's yarns were knocked topsy-turvy. Large and spotless and brick-tiled, this was more like a hotel kitchen, and the three black cooks were nattily garbed in white clothes and caps.

"No, suh. Nothin' extry. Regular cargo boat style," one of them had answered to Judson's question. "An' I'se liable to up an' quit 'less I gits mo' electric lights an' a porcelain servin' table."

Where was the old damp and reeking kennel of a forecastle in which sailors had been treated much worse than dogs? Judson looked for it in vain. He found neat staterooms for four and eight men, and

mess-rooms where they ate in decency and comfort with stewards to wait on them. Possibly the sea had lost some of its romance, but it had become human and civilized. There were no bullying, cursing, rough-neck officers to make a ship a hell. Judson watched them with keen interest, and was told that all of them were American sailors bred and born, of the old seafaring strain, who hailed from ports down-east.

There was no work for the apprentices during this first evening aboard the *Roanoke*, and they sprawled in groups among the winches or hung over the rail and sang close harmonies. Up from the engine-room compartment came a grimy figure of a compact, muscular young man in a sleeveless undershirt and dungarees, a very dirty towel slung about his neck. After drinking something like a gallon of water, he sat upon a coil of hawser where the breeze blew strong, and Judson identified him as "Kid" Briscoe.

"Hello, big boy!" shouted the hard-boiled guy. "Got your sea-legs on? And how does she head?"

"What the dickens have you been doing with yourself?" demanded Judson.

"They were short a regular fireman and I signed on this afternoon. Captain Waterman had me on the carpet and talked like the original Dutch uncle. What was I doing in this kindergarten, and all that. I have surely met men that were easier to bluff than that wise old skipper."

"Shamed you into tackling a real, grown-up job, did he?" said Judson. "Of course you did n't belong with us infants. I saw that."

"You are not as thick as you look," scoffed the "Kid." "Well, I took out my union card and I'm pulling down ninety-five a month. There's another reason, Jud. I don't like the idea of losing you. Sounds sort of mushy, I suppose, but I'm hoping we'll be buddies again."

"I wish this trouble had n't stacked up between us," was the sincere reply.

"You still have your doubts about me. I see that," said Briscoe. "That's why I intend to stick along with you until you give me a clean bill of health. It's a funny world and I have seen the rotten streaks in it, but I never double-crossed a pal and you'll come to believe it some day."

The *Roanoke* coaled ship next morning and her decks were black with the dust which flew from the dirty stuff as it thundered by the carload from the great chutes overhead. The boys had their first taste of sailoring as they toiled with shovel and deck-broom and hose to clean the ship or trimmed the coal in the stifling bunkers. In the opinion of some of them the life was not what it had been cracked up to be. The ship was all grime and confusion from one end to the other, the steward's stores of beef and potatoes and what not trundling up the gangway, negro stevedores loafing underfoot, steam winches clattering and derrick booms swinging crazily about, coal pouring in, until the young landsmen began to think

they were in a floating madhouse. Of course, they got in the way and fell over each other to make it worse.

And then like magic order came out of chaos as the mates and the boatswains mustered their forces and spoke a quiet word here and there. A few hours and the *Roanoke* was as clean and bright as a new penny and every last thing was in its proper place. The boys stared up at the lofty, canvas-screened bridge and saw the bronzed captain of the ship leisurely strolling to and fro as though he had not a care in the world. The chief officer took his station in the bow, the second officer ran aft, and it was time to cast off. The whistle blew its hoarse warning, the captain waved his hand, and the huge hawsers were slipped off the bollards on the wharf.

The excited youngsters were astonished when they noticed that the ship was slowly moving out into the stream. It was all done with such an absence of fuss and noise that they could not realize the departure. The *Roanoke* swung into the channel and her hull quivered to the throb of the screw as she picked up speed and surged seaward. It was a quiet, almost windless day, with a sleeping ocean of blue as the steamer moved out past the Capes and turned where the lightship rolled her tubby sides in the slight swell. The boys were divided into watches of eight hours on duty, on deck, in the fireroom, in the kitchen and pantries, to help and observe and learn from the men who knew their trade.

The tasks were not hard, for many hands made light work, and the voyage seemed a good deal like a holiday lark.

Twenty-four hours out of port, and the *Roanoke* was snoring along on her southerly course in the same gentle weather. Most of the lads had been spared the affliction of seasickness and they began to brag about it. Going to sea was a perfect cinch with just enough to do to keep a fellow healthy. They might have felt less comfortable could they have heard the chief officer say at the supper table:

"I thought this calm spell was a regular weather-breeder. She's going to blow and blow good and plenty. The glass has been dropping since noon like she was hunting the cellar, and the radio man reports storm signals hoisted all the way from Key West to Norfolk."

"The hurricane season is on, but we're not far enough south for that," commented the fat chief engineer. "I was caught once, in the Florida Straits, and there was only four of us floated ashore on a capsized boat after the blessed tanker turned turtle."

"You would float anywhere," unkindly retorted the mate. "Look at your displacement amidships. I am no croaker, but I'll bet you the cigars we are in for a hoister of a gale of wind before daylight."

"It will show us what one of these wooden steamers can do," ventured the third officer. "They were scrambled together for the War, and they tell me they're liable to open up like a basket in real heavy

weather. We have had fair passages so far, nothing to test her out, and I am curious to know."

"I guess you'll know, all right," carelessly replied the chief officer as he left the table and sauntered on deck.

## CHAPTER V

### A REAL "BREEZE OF WIND"

THE sun sank into the sea as a great red ball which glowed through a smoky haze that suggested Indian summer. As the dusk closed down, the sky overhead was still clear enough to let the stars come out one by one, and the steamer moved quietly upon an ocean which was serenely untroubled. The air was soft and sweet, but not a breath of wind ruffled the shining water and the smoke from the funnel drifted lazily astern like a black banner. A four-masted schooner floated idly, no more than a hundred yards away, with a phantom-like gleam of canvas, but aboard the *Roanoke* they could hear the rattle of blocks and the rumble of the steam winch as sail was shortened and the vessel snugged down to meet whatever the darkness might have in store. It was plain to see that her skipper mistrusted the weather and dreaded a lee shore.

The eighty boys of the training ship were in a holiday mood after the day's work. A banjo and a mouth-organ were tearing off dance music for a dozen couples who fox-trotted in a clear space of the forward deck. Through an open hatch rose the rag-time melodies of a piano and the noise made by a sentimental youth who thought he had a tenor voice. Judson Wyman and several others were

grouped around one of the boatswains, a sedate, whiskered man of middle age who was a genuine, deep-water sailor. He was tattooed like a picture postal card, and the yarns that he spun these innocent lads made their mouths hang open. Perhaps some of them were true. It was with great reluctance that Judson wrenched himself away when the ship's bell rapped out eight o'clock. It was his turn to stand a four-hour watch with the lookout man in the bow.

He was climbing to his station when the shrill notes of a boatswain's pipe, or silver whistle, trilled through the ship. Orders were sung out in the darkness and there was the tramp of feet as the seamen of the crew went about their business. The boys were not asked to turn to, and those who got in the way were shoved aside. Something unusual was going on, they uneasily guessed that much. A sailor learns to feel his way about a ship in the blackest night, by a sort of sixth sense, but it was all strange and perplexing to these young greenhorns.

The captain of the *Roanoke*, unseen up there on the shadowy bridge, had decided that it was time to make everything secure and prepare the ship for a conflict with the sea. All boats were swung in and bound fast in the chocks with extra lashings. The donkey engines swung the great hatch covers into place and their tarpaulin covers were strapped down with iron bands. Then the long derrick booms were firmly held by stays hauled taut. Everything movable on deck that might break

adrift was either stowed below or lashed more strongly. All portholes were closed and the deadlights screwed down.

Judson Wyman, standing upon the triangle of deck far up in the bow, said to the lookout man beside him:

"What is all the fuss about? I should think they would let that work wait for daylight."

"The weather don't wait. It ain't as obligin' as that," was the gruff reply. "Did you have sense enough to bring your boots and oilskins?"

"I never thought of it. This is like a summer night on a duck-pond."

"Go below and fetch 'em," growled the lookout man. "You may get a bit of real sailorin' during this watch. Unless I read the signs all wrong, your education is due to begin."

Judson scampered to his locker in the living space between decks and found a crowd of boys at the long tables, writing letters home, reading magazines, playing cards, or still at the piano. A few had curled up in their bunks, for the air was hot and stuffy with the hatches closed. The slight motion of the ship was enough to turn their complexions green and make them wish they had never left home. One of them opened his eyes and feebly inquired:

"Anything doing, Wyman? When we asked questions the crew chased us below and told us to shut up. For all I care the darned old ship can go to the bottom."

"The dope is that we're running into a storm or something," was the cheerful information.

Rude voices from the tables called him a false alarm and told him to beat it. He was trying to throw a scare into them. Dodging a couple of books that were hurled at his head, Judson hurried on deck and groped his way forward, stumbling over two ring-bolts and colliding with a ventilator. In the pitchy blackness of the night he felt as though he were blindfolded. Literally he could not see his hand before his face. The sky was curtained with low clouds that fairly pressed down upon the lonely ship. There was no wind as yet, but the sea heaved a trifle more in long, unbroken swells which the tall prow flung aside in flashing sheets of foam. There was a faint glow and flicker of lightning against the shrouded horizon.

Judson Wyman was not frightened, but he felt that quicker beating of the heart and the lump in the throat which had been familiar just before the kick-off of a big football game. This struggle which menaced the ship was all unknown and mysterious to him. It steadied him to look aft at the cheery flood of light as a door was opened, and to hear the voices of officers and men chatting on deck. The seaman in charge of the lookout stepped to the ship's bell on the forecastle head and the mellow notes rang out. Another vigilant watcher called up to the bridge:

"Two bells, sir. All 's well and the lights are burning bright."

An hour after this the wind began to rise, blowing gustily and driving a drizzling rain along with it. The *Roanoke* was heading almost directly into it and held her course unchanged. One fitful squall followed another, each one heavier than the last. The mighty orchestra of Old Boreas was tuning up before the performance began. For the first time Judson Wyman heard the funnel stays and rigging of a ship sing like a harp as the wind plucked at them. The sea began to break in frothy crusts that glimmered alongside. The steamer lifted and plunged as she crashed through them.

Then the storm broke in full violence. Old Boreas waved his baton and the wild tumult was on. The ocean swiftly piled up in hills and valleys of roaring water which smote the ship and rushed in floods across her reeling decks. Clinging to a steel railing and somewhat sheltered behind the canvas screen, Judson Wyman had never imagined that the wind could blow so hard as this, although he had once seen a prairie tornado playfully swoop down and pick up a little settlement and scatter it all over the landscape. His stolid comrade, the lookout man, with a dripping sou'wester tied under his chin, crawled over to bawl in his ear:

"She'll get worse before she gets any better. No sense in leaving us two guys here. The old hooker is liable to poke her nose into it and float us off to glory."

Judson shouted something, but the wind blew the words away. It was his duty, he knew, to stick at

his post until relieved. He had not the slightest notion of quitting, but he hoped the officers had not forgotten them. Deep down in his soul he found a thrill of satisfaction because the job was hard and manly and dangerous. He had not come to sea to loaf on deck in the sunshine with a lot of other happy-go-lucky lads. Then the *Roanoke* took a sickening plunge and a solid wall of water reared higher than her bow. She swung up an instant too late to parry the blow, and it seemed to Judson that the whole Atlantic Ocean was toppling over her.

Submerged and strangled, he was washed like a chip and found himself wrapped around the anchor winch. The sea poured overboard as the shivering ship shook herself free and pluckily faced the next round. The lookout man was on his hands and knees and Judson bumped into him as they clawed their way back to the rail. Neither of them had any breath to spare for conversation. They were rubbing their respective bumps and bruises when the chief officer hoisted himself up the ladder, groped about to find them, and yelled:

"Come out of this! Thank God, you are still aboard. I was afraid that big sea had carried you both to Davy Jones."

Gratefully they followed him to the main deck and carefully footed it to the sheltered passageway of the forward house. Banging the door behind him, the chief officer paused to say to the drowned rat of a Judson:

"Go up to the galley, son, and get warm before

you turn in. And there is plenty of hot coffee in the tank. Help yourself."

"Thank you, sir," stammered Judson, whose teeth were chattering, "and do you mind telling me whether this is a hurricane?"

"A mighty lively breeze of wind," said the mariner, with a kindly twinkle. "Yes, you can call it some breeze of wind. I don't know as you'd call it a hurricane quite yet, but she has the symptoms."

"Will the ship pull through all right, sir? Not that I'm scared, but —"

"You can bank on what I say, son. This vessel will either sink or swim. You'll know which at this time to-morrow. Think of all the poor people ashore that die in their beds. Does n't that comfort you?"

"I g-guess so," doubtfully answered Judson the landlubber. He lingered awhile in the cozy galley, but the place was too warm and he was distinctly squeamish in the region of his stomach. When he clambered below to find his bunk, the emotions of distress became much more acute. A hasty survey convinced him that his young shipmates were seasick by a unanimous vote. They were most unpleasant to look at and their groans were awful to have to listen to. Some appeared to be afraid they were going to die, and others afraid that they would n't. The scoundrels who had persuaded them to go to sea ought to be thrown in jail for life.

Judson scattered a few hasty words of hope and sympathy, and discovered that what he needed most was fresh air. Escaping from this place of

many sorrows, he returned to the upper deck on the chance of finding a fairly sheltered spot behind one of the houses. Anything was better than enduring the society of those pallid sufferers below. When he groped along in the outer darkness, the increased fury of the wind fairly stunned him. He was not a coward, but he found himself saying his prayers and wondering why he had left a perfectly safe home in Follansbee, North Dakota.

The steamer seemed to be making no headway at all and was like a battered, helpless hulk, but far down in her hold the tireless, faithful engines throbbed to drive the whirling screw. With good luck Judson discovered a corner where a lifeboat broke the spray and a steel wall offered a lee. There he huddled miserably while the wild night dragged its slow moments past. At length, a steel door near him flew open with a clang and in the shaft of light he saw a sooty figure of a man emerge. A terrific roll of the ship sent him flying down to leeward, as if he had fallen off the roof of a house. He fetched up against Judson Wyman, rebounded, and then came sliding back with the next roll.

Unable to see, they hugged each other in a forced embrace. Judson heard a grunt of:

"Ouch! That's my nose you're pushing against. Lay off me, brother, for the love of Mike!"

"Is that you, Kid Briscoe?" shouted Judson. "You pretty near butted me overboard. Reach up and grab the hand-rail just behind you."

"Fine, Jud. Glad to meet you. This drunken

old scow is pitching the center of gravity plumb out of herself. It's 'most as pleasant as living in a destroyer. Quite a spell of weather, eh, boy?"

"It's frightful," cried Judson, with a slight quaver in his voice. There was a surprising amount of comfort in having the unterrified Briscoe to share the wretched solitude. "How are things down below, Kid? Is the ship holding together and does she leak very much?"

"Dry as a basket of chips and taking it as easy as an old shoe," was the careless assurance. "And a lot of croakers told me that going to sea in one of these jerry-built wooden steamers was a bum risk. It's hell in the fireroom, but what do you expect in a gale like this?"

"How bad is it? Did you just come off watch?"

"One stoker busted his leg. The third engineer had his head split open, and the doctor is down there easing up the guys that got the hide burned off 'em. He just finished bandaging me from the neck to the elbow. When you pull open a door to throw in a shovel of coal, the whole blamed fire is liable to spill out on you. And it takes some acrobat to keep his feet on the slippery gratings. But she's making the steam."

"Whew! Are any of the apprentices down there helping you?" asked Judson.

"We chased 'em out hours ago," answered the hard-boiled guy. "It was no place for seasick little passengers. How's your nerve?"

"I feel rotten, and I guess I am scared," honestly

confessed Judson. "Were you ever in a storm as bad as this one?"

"Once, in the Bay of Biscay, in a tin flivver of a six-hundred-ton destroyer. She was stripped clean, funnels and all, and we stoked her with the water up to our knees. When she limped into Brest a week overdue, the admiral called it a dizzy miracle. This is a big, new ship and she'll take a lot of pounding."

They were tense and silent while the laboring hull shook as though it had rammed a rock, and a thundering comber fell on deck forward with a crash of splintered woodwork. Judson began to realize what "Kid" Briscoe had meant by stripping her clean.

"Why don't you turn in and get some rest, Kid?" said he.

"And get chucked out of my bunk every minute or two? Nothing to it. A porous plaster could n't stick in bed a night like this. And I could n't sleep for the burns on my arm."

They hung on and waited for the daylight which seemed as far away as eternity. True it was, indeed, that misery loved company. Not many nights before this, they had been angrily hammering each other's faces in a street of Newport News, and now "Kid" Briscoe had one arm wrapped around Judson Wyman's neck in order to anchor himself, and all enmity was forgotten. They were drowsing off in a sort of half-stupor that came from sheer exhaustion when the ship swung her head and the rudder failed

to check her in time. She was caught like a boxer with his guard down. A gray sea climbed over her side and towered before it broke.

It crushed a lifeboat like an eggshell and left the fragments dangling from the empty davits. Across the deck it rushed and tore "Kid" Briscoe and Judson Wyman from their shelter. Still clinging to each other they were submerged and swept to the other side of the ship. Again she rolled so heavily that it seemed impossible for her to come up, and another huge sea stamped over her with a great noise of breaking glass as it smashed the skylights and flooded into the compartments below. Judson and his shipmate were picked up by this hissing cataract and carried heels over head before they could grasp anything to save themselves.

Easily the sea swung them up over the rail and was about to sweep them away to a choking death in the darkness when Judson flung his arm out and, by blind chance, his fingers closed on a taut rope of the falls of a boat. It was securely fastened to a heavy cleat on the arched steel davit. Also, by the merest chance, Judson's other hand was clutching the leather belt of "Kid" Briscoe.

The destructive sea tumbled over the side and the ship cleared herself. She was again under control, bravely steaming dead into the storm and no longer exposing her side to those deadly assaults. Judson Wyman was left clinging to that providential rope with one hand and to Briscoe's leather belt with the other. They were suspended over the very edge of

the ship's deck and unable to gain any foothold whatever. In fact, Briscoe was hanging against the smooth, slippery side of the ship while he desperately struggled to find a hold for his fingers or toes.

There they dangled, Judson locked like grim death to the heavy pulley rope which was almost as rigid as a bar of iron, and his other hand straining to retain its grip on the wriggling Briscoe's leather belt. The strain on those splendid shoulders of the football guard was enough to pull them apart. The big arms and muscular fingers had been toughened by years of toil out-of-doors. In this ordeal, however, it was the soul that counted more than the body, the soul of a boy who did not know when he was whipped. By letting go of that leather belt he could use both hands to swing himself to the deck, but it never occurred to him to let go.

Above the shouting turmoil of wind and sea they could hear the shouts of officers and seamen as they ran to drag tarpaulins over the shattered skylights or to investigate the damage elsewhere. But they rushed past the unseen lads hanging over the side of the ship and failed to hear their breathless, broken cries for help. As he swung flattened against the side of the ship, "Kid" Briscoe ceased trying to aid himself. He realized that it only made matters worse for his companion. The leather belt had slipped up from his waist so that he could turn his face toward Judson. Presently there came a slightly quieter moment in the storm, not a lull, but a respite between the great seas that strove to batter and

sink the ship. With all his strength Briscoe yelled:

"Cut loose, Jud, you fool, and never mind me. I'd cast off this belt, but the strain has jammed the buckle. I'm done for, but what's the sense in drowning you?"

Judson heard him. It was like a voice in a nightmare. There was no craven selfishness in this appeal from "Kid" Briscoe. He was not begging for his own life. Even a hard-boiled guy may have his redeeming virtues. Judson's torn right hand clenched the rope more tenaciously than ever and he endured the agonizing pain in his arms and shoulders. There was no doubt in his mind. It was not a problem at all. Unhesitatingly he shouted back to Briscoe:

"Forget it. If we go, we go together. What kind of a yellow pup do you think I am?"

There was silence in the darkness just below, but Judson fancied he heard Briscoe's reckless laugh come like an echo from another world. The spray drove in their faces and pelted them with a cruelty which seemed malicious. Why should the furious ocean add this torment when it was about to swallow them up? To count it in seconds and minutes, their plight had been brief, but such a situation was not to be measured in time. Judson's fingers slipped a little, but tightened again. His lips moved in the prayers which, years ago, he had said with his head in his mother's lap.

The chief officer, inspecting the boats to see how many were left, swung his lantern close to a davit

and discovered a lad clinging by one hand to a rope of the falls. Amazed, he braced himself to tug at the helpless figure and hoist it inboard. An unexpected weight staggered him, and he suspended his efforts until he could hold the lantern over the side. With a sailor's ready wit he slashed with his knife at a coil of rope which was lashed to the davit, snatched a free end, and dropped it in a bight over "Kid" Briscoe's head and shoulders. Making this loop secure on the big cleat, he caught up another length of rope and passed it around Judson's body.

Having made the two derelicts safe for the moment, the chief officer ran to get help. Two seamen returned with him, and they pulled Briscoe to the deck like some strange kind of a fish. He rolled over and lay limp in a complete collapse while the rescue party turned its attention to Judson Wyman. The cramped fingers so inflexibly gripped the rope that, after carefully trying to pry them apart, the chief officer gave up the attempt.

"Here, one of you, cut a short length out of this fall," said he, "and splice it as soon as the weather will let you. The boy is all in, unconscious, and his fingers have set like a vise."

And so they carried Judson into the ship's hospital with a bit of rope in one hand and a leather belt in the other. He was stripped and rubbed and tucked into a warm bed which he could not roll out of, and slowly he thawed and came to himself. His bones ached intolerably, most of the ligaments of his neck and shoulders felt as though they had been

pulled from their sockets, and he stared curiously at his bandaged hands. Turning himself in bed, he looked at the white walls of the brightly lighted room and wondered where he was. In another berth he saw a fellow patient whose hair was black and whose face was lean and hard. He had been scrubbed with soap and hot water, but under his eyes were the faint shadows of grime which mark the man of the stoke-hole. With a wink and a grin he called across to Judson:

"Pretty soft, eh? All the comforts of home. Gee, we must have been asleep for hours and hours. Day has begun to break and she's still blowin' the same old gale."

"Hello, Kid," weakly replied Judson. "They strapped me in, or I'd be rolling around the floor like a football. How do you feel, anyhow?"

"All mussed up. I was burned and drowned and had my stomach cut in two with a belt, all in one night. How much is left of you?"

"I am a total wreck," murmured Judson. "The doctor had better pass me up. What I need is a carpenter and joiner. I'm all warped and sprung and my rivets have pulled out."

Briscoe made no response to this fooling. He was in a thoughtful mood. After some time he said, with an effort:

"I owe you something, Jud. I'm not a guy to slop over, but when you refused to let me drop into the briny last night — well, you know how I feel about it, don't you?"

"I could n't do anything else," answered Judson, in his simple way. "There really is n't anything in it all to make a fuss about. I never thought I could do anything else than hang on to you."

"I understand," gravely spoke Briscoe. "Now, listen. A man could n't owe you much more than I do, could he? Would I be apt to lie to you now? You know what I mean, about that pocketbook you said I stole. It has stood up between us like a barb-wire fence, Jud. Am I ornery enough to lie to you, after what happened on deck last night? What do you say?"

"I'll say I believe you," sincerely answered Judson, with a glow of happiness. "And an apology goes with it."

"Then I call it a lucky old gale of wind," said "Kid" Briscoe.

"Me, too, buddy," smiled Judson as he waved a bandaged fist in cordial greeting.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SHIPMATE NAMED MADDIGAN

AFTER the terrific night of storm the wind began to die down and patches of blue sky showed through rifts in the sullen clouds. By noon the sunlight sparkled on an ocean which ran in swollen surges and was resplendent with foam. The *Roanoke* pushed through it steadily, powerfully, as she rolled and dipped to the cradling motion of a sea which no longer endeavored to drown her. Battered and unkempt she looked, funnel and winches and houses all gray with salt, boats demolished, rails twisted, ventilators caved in like an old hat, and skylights fairly wrenched from their frames.

There was plenty of work for the young apprentices who had been rudely plucked out of their bunks by their schoolmasters, the boatswains. Many of them were still seasick and very low in their minds, but they managed to stagger on deck, their pallid countenances expressing great surprise that the ship was afloat and they had lived to tell the tale. These sufferers were almost useless, but the fresh breeze revived them a little, and they dragged themselves from one task to another when they were not hanging over the rail in active unhappiness — but such scenes we had better pass by. One incident only shall be mentioned. A husky lad who

had been spared this affliction was heard to say to a woe-begone friend of his:

"I thought you were a sailor, Tom. Sorry to see you weaken."

The invalid rolled a glassy eye as he replied, with annoyance:

"*Weaken?* Who said I weakened? Ain't I throwing it as far as any of 'em?"

In the immaculate ship's hospital, Judson Wyman slept for twelve hours on end. He awoke very stiff and sore, but in a cheerful humor and as hungry as a wolf. Expecting no coddling at sea, he was about to climb out and look for his clothes. "Kid" Briscoe was earnestly snoring with his mouth open, but he moved uneasily and the burned arm twitched on the blanket. The youthful doctor came in just then, and at sight of the six-foot patient who was sitting up in bed he sternly exclaimed:

"Stay where you are, Wyman. Your breakfast will be sent up. I want you to take it easy for a day or so. How do your hands feel? They were badly skinned."

"Oh, I am all right," Judson protested, "but what about Briscoe? He is worse off than I am."

"He won't have to report for duty until he is fit. Don't worry about that," was the comforting response. "There are boys enough to shovel coal. The captain will be in to see you after his morning round of inspection."

"The captain?" echoed Judson, in an alarmed voice. "What did I ever do to him?"

"Oh, he won't bite you. He is almost human at times. We all think a lot of the skipper."

An hour later Judson had dozed off again when the slam of a door aroused him and he looked up to see a tall, rather slender man who walked with a slight stoop. The neat blue uniform was unwrinkled and the weather-burned chin freshly shaven. It was not easy to realize that Captain Henry Nickerson of the *Roanoke* had remained on the bridge throughout the storm and was still on duty, unless you happened to notice the tired eyes. His voice was low and he talked with a certain gentle deliberation between the words. He drew up a chair as though glad of the chance to be off his feet for a moment, and said to Judson:

"The chief officer, Mr. Snow, told me about you. It was a fine bit of work, I understand. How are you feeling?"

"Anxious to get on the job, sir," replied Judson, who found that he was not as much awed as he had expected to be. "Of course, I could n't let go of a buddy. That would have been a dirty trick. But *he* did the really big thing, sir, and Mr. Snow did n't know about that. Briscoe begged me to turn him loose and let him drown so I could have a chance."

"Two of a kind? In honor preferring one another," murmured Captain Nickerson. "Briscoe is a fireman, I think. He is still asleep, I see."

At this moment the energetic fireman abruptly ceased snoring, turned over in his bunk, opened one bright eye and muttered to himself:

"Holy cats! It's the old man. Am I pinched again, and what for?"

Captain Nickerson chuckled at this and strolled across the room, easily swaying to the motion of the ship as he said:

"You may deserve to be pinched. I don't know about that. But I have no intention of logging you. In fact, I am proud to have two such lads in my crew, and this is what I came in to tell you both. I shall speak to the chief engineer about you, Briscoe."

"Thank you, sir. And please tell him I'll be down there with bells on just as soon as the doc lifts the embargo."

The captain smiled at this and said to Judson:

"You will be pretty lame for deck duty. Better report to the bridge as a messenger for the rest of the run, and the quartermasters will give you a chance at the steering wheel. Good morning to you, boys."

As the door closed, "Kid" Briscoe exclaimed, with a very virtuous air:

"The Navy never did appreciate me. Look at this! A medal pinned on me already. I surely do hate myself. This merchant service is n't so rotten."

"I was thinking of what the captain went through in that storm last night," observed Judson.

"Yes, with a steam-heated wheel-house to duck into," flared Briscoe in loyal devotion to his own department. "Maybe he did lose some sleep and fret himself, but what pulled him through? A fat old porpoise of a chief engineer and his sweaty gang that put the steam to her. Well, we won't mix it up, Jud.

I know what pulled *me* through. It was a game lad as strong as an ox, with a pair of hands as big as hams."

The two patients endured the confinement fairly well until late in the afternoon, what with reading and eating and chatting with visitors. They became mutinous and pestered the doctor until he consented to let them go on deck for a little while. The ship was clean and trim again, and the storm seemed like an evil memory. There were many scars to recall it, but all the litter and disorder had been cleared up. The blue sea was quieting rapidly and the soft air was like the first breath of the tropics. The boys were finding their sea-legs and also their hope of seeing land again. There were even sounds of laughter here and there, and the mouth-organ was playing "Strike up the Band, Here comes a Sailor." A few hours earlier, the owner of the instrument would have thought a dead march more appropriate.

They talked mostly about the storm. It had been a tremendous experience, something to boast about ashore. One of the officers had been heard to say that more than one good ship must have gone to the bottom. They firmly believed that the escape of the *Roanoke* had been nothing short of marvelous. They were proud of the ship and the skipper and the crew. It had shaken these youngsters together in more ways than one. They belonged to the ship's company and her fortunes were their own. They had learned to think of this wooden steamer, built as much like a hundred others as peas in a pod, with

a peculiar affection and allegiance. To them she was different from all the rest, better than any other ship afloat. She was no longer a mere dead fabric of wood and steel, but like a living thing with the will to struggle and to endure. This meant that, although they were not yet sailors, they had ceased to be landlubbers.

The storm was also a test of manhood. The sea soon sifts out and discards the unworthy. It had stamped a few of the boys as counterfeits. They had lost heart and were ready to quit as soon as they could set foot on dry land. Most of them, however, were made of stronger stuff, and in them was the fine spirit of youth which rejoices in hardship and danger. Bravest of all were those who continued to be seasick and yet obeyed orders and did their work without complaint.

One of these humble heroes was of the party of recruits who had come east from Minneapolis with Judson Wyman. He was the lad who had been a clerk in a shoe store. Charlie Trask was his name, and his shipmates had promptly nicknamed him "Skinny." He was eighteen and looked younger, a weedy, freckled lad with a timid manner. He admired Judson beyond words as a football player and the man who had tamed the rampageous "Kid" Briscoe in the smoking-car of the train. It was the kind of hero worship which a weaker boy is apt to feel toward physical prowess. Fortunately Charlie Trask had not beheld the argument that night in Newport News when the great Judson had been

decorated with a lovely black eye to prove that Briscoe, James E., was, indeed, a genuine hard-boiled guy.

The gossip had spread through the ship that Wyman and Briscoe were in the hospital because of some sort of a grand-stand stunt during the storm. They had saved each other's lives somehow, having been washed overboard and back again, and the captain had actually called to congratulate them. The distinction aroused very little envy. It was an honor which had been conferred upon the whole crowd, as they viewed the matter. Did n't it go to show that the greenhorns were the real stuff? Charlie Trask was bold enough to climb to the upper deck where Judson and Briscoe were lounging outside the hospital door and venture to say, quite hurriedly:

"Excuse me, Wyman — I don't mean to butt in — but we're mighty glad you are alive and kicking. The fellows are crazy to hear all about it, of course, and —"

"Kid" Briscoe broke in to suggest:

"You go for'ard and slap the captain on the back and ask him. If he happens to be asleep, pull him out of bed. He won't mind. Anything to make the boys feel at home is his motto."

"You are joking, I'm sure, Mr. Briscoe," politely replied Charlie Trask, turning red with embarrassment. "The captain would n't like it at all. He is terribly strict about discipline."

"That will be enough from you, Briscoe, James E.,"

chided Judson. "Pay no attention to him, Charlie. He bumped his head last night and it made him crazier than ever. Really there is n't much to tell. A big sea caught us on deck and bunged us up some. If you should get hurt, I'm sure the captain would drop in to ask about you. Now tell me what happened to you."

"Nothing much," sighed Charlie Trask, with an uneasy gulp. "I was too sick all night to remember much except being thrown out of bed a few dozen times. Once I landed in another fellow's bunk and he kicked me out and I fell on top of somebody else and he kicked me out and —"

"Who finally kicked the goal?" put in the brutal Briscoe. "And what was the score? I'm too nervous to stand the suspense."

"I rolled out of bounds, jammed in between the lockers, and stayed there," replied Trask. "To-day? Well, I stuck it out through my eight-hour watch, but I am far from well. The master-at-arms tells me he has known sailors that never did get over being seasick. I guess I am elected."

"Not at all. You will holler for salt pork and spuds about to-morrow," said the cheerful Judson. "Tell me, Charlie, who is the tall, fleshy fellow you were chinning with a few minutes ago? There he stands, on the starboard side next to the ladder. He joined us at Camp Stuart only two or three days before the ship sailed and I did n't meet him."

"Oh, his name is Herbert Maddigan. He comes from New York. He was telling me all about him-

self. His father is a vice-president of the Atlantic Steamship Company and a very rich man. He wants his son to learn the business from the bottom and that is why he enlisted in the training service."

"Yes, he would naturally tell you all about himself," observed Briscoe. "He is a young man of one idea. He looks pasty to me — twenty pounds overweight. Not that I dislike his style, but it would please me a whole lot to pick a soft spot and sink my fist in him."

"He does blow a good deal, it seems to me," admitted Charlie Trask, who was reluctant to speak unpleasantly of any one. "But I suppose he has been spoiled at home. He had trouble in prep school and was canned, and he tutored for Princeton and flunked in freshman year. Then his dad sent him to sea and cut off his cash allowance. He grumbles about the food and says the officers are dubs and most of the boys muckers."

"Don't let him bully you, Charlie," advised Judson. "He will try it, if you give him any rope."

"Wise words," croaked Briscoe. "If he starts to ride you, find something that is n't nailed down and hit him with it. That gink would spoil my well-known sunny disposition. I heard some of his chatter, the first night out."

"He seems to have picked me out for a chum," said Trask. "And he is quite interesting, at times."

Just then the lordly Herbert Maddigan looked up and beckoned. Charlie Trask obeyed the summons as though he were pulled at the end of a string.

He liked to make himself useful to other people and Maddigan had shrewdly found it out. Patience and courtesy had been drilled into Trask as a boyish clerk in a shoe store, with special deference toward wealthy customers, and he may have been impressed with a sense of Maddigan's importance.

The two invalids were fairly riotous next day and announced that the hospital, or sick bay, of a ship was the next thing to a term in jail. The doctor was glad to get them off his hands, although he refused to restore them to full duty. Briscoe limped to the quarters where he lived with the other firemen and Judson Wyman hobbled below to rejoin his comrades between-decks. It interested him to find them talking sea lingo like old salts. They were picking up the names of things in the nautical world which has a language of its own, terms and phrases that have come down through centuries of seafaring. They were adjusting themselves to the strange, detached life of sailormen as if they had never known anything else. They no longer referred to the sea as a pond or a puddle. The first lesson had been learned to fear and respect the eternally unconquerable ocean. Some day they might learn to love it, to yearn for its savage humors and its fickle caresses, but this lesson was still distant.

Mindful of the captain's orders, Judson reported at the bridge for messenger duty, which really meant that he was to be made familiar with the sacred realm of the wheel-house. There were occasional errands for him, he discovered — to the

rooms of the captain and the officers on watch, to find somebody on deck, to fetch the bulletins from the radio-room, to carry papers to the purser's office. But most of the time he stood in the spacious, airy wheel-house or gazed from the narrow bridge which spanned the ship high above the sea. These were rather silent places. The captain was a man who kept his thoughts to himself and the officers on watch seemed to have fallen into the same habit. It seemed to be a trick of the trade and conveyed a sense of unceasing vigilance.

The quartermaster at the small brass wheel twirled the spokes this way and that, and his eyes were always glued on the black line of the swaying compass card in the binnacle bowl. A word from Mr. Snow, the chief officer, and the quartermaster stepped aside to let Judson take the wheel and sense the feel of the ship. He gripped it excitedly, forgetful of his tender hands, but found that a child could turn it with a touch. Steam was the servant that moved the massive rudder. Instead of an obedient ship as he expected, Judson was horrified to find that she was bent on running all over the ocean. A sea swung her to port and then she reeled off to starboard. The compass card seemed bewitched. This was not at all like steering a course with a dummy wheel in the instruction class at Camp Stuart.

Perspiration streamed down Judson's face. It was not from exertion, but sheer nervousness. Mr. Snow relieved him after a short time and said:

"We try to give the likely lads a few lessons during the voyage. Some men are born helmsmen, others always make poor work of it. You will learn. This southerly run is pleasant in the winter season. I suppose you have never seen Jamaica."

"I never saw salt water before, sir."

"We load logwood at Blue River. The ship carries cargo to help pay her way."

The chief officer was a man who had read many books during long voyages in other ships and had stored them in his memory. The romance of earlier centuries in the storied waters of the West Indies appealed to his imagination and at his tongue's end were the yarns of the buccaneers and pirates who had sailed from Jamaica and its harbors. He had taken a fancy to Judson who was a good listener, and he made the prosaic business of loading logwood into a modern steamer seem like an adventure. Many of those picturesque cut-throats who had harried the Spanish Main were logwood cutters when the trade of piracy was dull. Alas, their low, rakish vessels no more scoured the seas, Judson reflected aloud, to which Mr. Snow retorted that they were a dirty lot of rogues who had never scoured themselves or their ships.

The *Roanoke* moved over a lustrous sea beneath unclouded skies and the wind-sails bellied in the open hatches to temper the heat in the quarters between-decks. It was lazy weather, but the routine of the ship went on in the same strict and methodical manner. The boys had light work and much

leisure because there were so many of them, but there was always the chance to learn and to observe. This was the idea, to give them a taste of the sea and to weed out the unfit and the unwilling. Those who had been shirkers ashore were apt to dodge labor on shipboard, to do no more than they were compelled to. Others were ambitious to study the books provided and to find out something about the science of navigation.

They became more or less divided into congenial groups, as was natural among young men of all sorts and conditions. There was a sprinkling of veterans of the Great War, boyish soldiers who had seen service in France and preferred the roving life out-of-doors to the desk, the shop, or the factory. They had experiences and memories which drew them together as chums. Another group had what you might call a socially exclusive flavor. In it were some rather silly youngsters who could not forget that their families were prominent in their own communities. They put on no airs and were agreeable enough, but it was easy to see that they were under the influence of the plump and pompous Herbert Maddigan. He had a jolly way with him and made these others feel flattered by his friendship. There was frequent mention of his father's Atlantic Steamship Company, and it was hinted that a bright young sailor would be pretty sure of promotion if he were recommended by Herbert Maddigan.

All this amused hard-headed Judson Wyman who looked on and said little. He did not mix very

easily and seldom made intimate friends at short notice. He had seen fellows of the Maddigan type on the college campus. They wore flashy clothes and tried to run things and valued popularity above everything else. "Making a splash" was their chief ambition. It bothered Judson a little to see such a simple-minded, decent boy as Charlie Trask hanging about the Maddigan crowd, but there was no reason to interfere. Maddigan could not last long. That kind never did. They were like a hot-air balloon.

What really made Judson sit up and take notice was the unexpected sight of "Kid" Briscoe loafing with Herbert Maddigan and his friends one idle afternoon. The genial Maddigan was paying particular attention to the hard-boiled guy. They were swapping yarns and laughing at each other's jokes as if here were two men who knew the world and had seen a thing or two.

Judson did not happen to meet Briscoe until a day or two after this, for they were not off watch at the same hours, but he noticed meanwhile from his station on the bridge that his buddy, the fireman, seemed to be enjoying the society of the Maddigan bunch. This was absurd and perplexing, and at the first opportunity Judson went straight to the point:

"Listen, Briscoe, James E., I heard you call this big simp of a Maddigan every name you could lay tongue to. You even yearned to murder him. And now you are as chummy as two kittens in a basket. Explain yourself."

For once Briscoe appeared uncomfortable and a trifle sheepish as he answered:

"He is not so bad as he sounds, honest, Jud. This Bert Maddigan is just one of those overgrown boys that tells everything he knows. I had him all wrong until I got to know him."

"So he has dazzled you, as he did Charlie Trask," growled Judson.

"Not at all. I'm too wise a bird," said Briscoe, with a shade of sullenness. "Maddigan is different from the kind of men I have knocked around with. Maybe a touch of high life will educate me some."

"I did n't think of that," observed Judson, less unkindly.

"There is something in it," said Briscoe. "Of course he don't get by with his blow-hard stuff, but I'll have to say he is entertaining."

Judson asked no more questions. He was sensible enough to see that it would do no good to meddle, and he could make allowances. "Kid" Briscoe had seen only the brutal, hard side of life. It was an immense novelty to him to meet on equal terms a young man who talked of millionaires as his neighbors, whose father owned an ocean-going yacht, who had the grand manner of a young prince in exile. Wiser folks than this battered waif of a "Kid" Briscoe have been led away by glitter and show and empty words. Judson Wyman was not far from the truth when he said to himself:

"Briscoe thinks he knows it all and that is why he is easily fooled. He likes me well enough, but I

come from a small town and that makes me a hick. My opinions are n't worth much. Great Scott, I could have sized up this Maddigan four-flusher if he had merely walked across the campus in my freshman year."

It was on the day before the mountains of Jamaica lifted their blue and misty peaks from the sea that the captain of the *Roanoke* called Judson aside and said:

"A good many of the boys seem to look up to you as a sort of leader since we bucked through that big gale of wind. And my chief officer speaks very highly of you, Wyman. I wonder if you can help me?"

This was such an odd speech from the remote and mighty master of the ship that Judson looked as amazed as he felt. Captain Nickerson smiled and went on to say:

"When the boys get ashore in one of these islands down here, some of them are apt to run wild. There is no prohibition law and rum is cheap and plenty, and there are other bad influences that are fairly flung at a sailor. It always worries me. I can't look after them after they leave the ship. We have had a Y.M.C.A. man aboard until this voyage, but he was called home. The ship's officers do what they can, but their duties keep them on board much of the time. It is a mistake, I think, to use these ships for cargo, just to earn a dollar for the Shipping Board. At any rate, they ought to be kept clear of long lays in these tropical ports."

"I get you, sir," respectfully answered Judson.

"There are enough older men mixed up in this crowd of boys to make trouble ashore."

"Yes, we usually get a few from Camp Stuart who enlisted for the chance of getting drunk in Cuba or Jamaica. They are men in their twenties who have been to sea before. What I have in mind, Wyman, is to ask you to talk the matter over with some of your kind of fellows and do all you can to keep the foolish youngsters from letting a taste of liberty go to their heads when they hit the beach. The first time in a foreign port is apt to make them flighty."

"I'll do my best, sir," warmly exclaimed Judson. "On the whole, it's a bully good crowd and the few bad eggs won't be allowed to spoil them if we can help it."

"I thought you would stand by," said Captain Nickerson, his hand upon Judson's shoulder. "Come and tell me how things are going. The ship will do all it can, and I shall try to be ashore every evening."

It was a great thing to be taken into the captain's confidence and to be asked to share his responsibility. After supper, when all hands were enjoying an hour of leisure on deck, Judson made it his business to look the crowd over with great care. He talked with perhaps a dozen sturdy, dependable fellows somewhere near his own age who he knew were ambitious to finish the training cruise with clean records. They were glad to lend a hand and considered it an honor to be chosen as unofficial guar-

dians of law and order. One of them said, with some anxiety:

"The hard cases won't give us much trouble. They will flock by themselves and keep under cover. They know the game. It 's chaps like this Bert Maddigan that we want to keep an eye on. He thinks it 's smart to paint the town red, and he will like nothing better than to lead some of these infants into mischief. Seeing life, he calls it."

"Suppose you leave him to me," replied Judson, a wicked gleam in his eye. "That young man irritates me. All I need is a good excuse."

With this new interest in his shipmates, Judson observed that young Charlie Trask seemed to avoid him. This was worth looking into, and Judson therefore waylaid the timid shoe clerk and said, in the most cordial manner:

"Where have you been keeping yourself? All over your seasickness?"

"Yes, thank you, and I begin to like sailoring," answered Trask, eyeing the deck and evidently about to break away.

"Well, you don't seem happy about it," exclaimed Judson. "I have a hunch that you are worried about something, Charlie, and it is not an uneasy stomach."

"Oh, everything is all right, Wyman. It is kind of you to think about me."

"What has Maddigan been doing to you?" severely demanded Judson. "You were to let me know, remember, if he bullied you."

"Maddigan is pleasant enough," weakly returned Charlie Trask, but he looked as though he had been scared out of his wits.

"He is hatching some deviltry and you don't dare tell me about it," was Judson's guess. "He has you right under his thumb. Better break away before that loud friend of yours lands you in the ship's brig. He will throw you over to clear himself if he gets in any trouble."

"Oh, I can look out for myself," muttered Trask, in uncertain tones. "Bert Maddigan admires you. I wish you had n't taken such a violent dislike to him. He is awfully open-hearted and generous."

"He is a false alarm," said Judson, very emphatically, "and you will be sorry, Charlie, that you refused to be frank with me. I want to help you."

With a hasty excuse, young Trask fled to join his watch which had been called to furl the awnings for the night. Judson had accused him at random and yet it was not all guesswork. The simple process of putting two and two together convinced him that some lawless plan was brewing among Maddigan's crowd and that he was the instigator. He could not be expected to behave himself ashore in Jamaica, and he hated to be alone anywhere. To be happy, such young men require a gang of applauding followers. "Kid" Briscoe seemed a misfit in this company, but Judson determined to ask him a question or two. The chance came during the evening and the issue was squarely put up to the reckless buddy.

"See here, Briscoe, James E., after we went

through that storm together, you said you owed me something. I never expected to remind you of it, but I have a favor to ask."

"It's as good as done, whatever it is, Jud. Do you want me to kill a man or some little trick like that? Just point him out."

"Will you cut out the booze while you are ashore in Jamaica? It sets a poor example for these boys when real sailors like you start in to take the town to pieces to see what makes it tick."

With a most melancholy sigh, which he fetched all the way up from his boots, Briscoe, James E., answered in reluctant accents:

"If you put it that way, Jud, it's up to me to stay as dry as a covered bridge, but this certainly does come under the head of cruel and unusual punishment. And, oh, boy, to waste that thirst that I fetched all the way from Newport News. No compromise, is there?"

"Not for you, Kid. I shall have to hold you to it. Will it be a hard struggle?"

"Not a bit of it. I like excitement, but with all my failings I'm no sot. Don't get the idea that I feel sore at you, Jud. I guess I ought to be much obliged, for I have sort of made up my mind to get ahead in this steamboat game. And rum never earned promotion for any man, so far as I know. It is a bargain, son."

# CHAPTER VII

## A GIRL AND A BASEBALL GAME

THE *Roanoke* rode at anchor in the lovely bay of Blue River. The white walls of the town gleamed in the midst of tall clusters of palms, and behind it rose the mountains, not bare and forbidding, but densely covered with foliage to their very summits. In this tranquil haven of Jamaica where summer always smiled, the ship was to rest awhile. The water was not deep enough for her to moor at a wharf, and the cargo of logwood had to be carried out in clumsy lighters manned by leisurely negroes who talked and sang and shouted all day long. It was a tedious business at best, and when the harbor was too rough the lighters were idle and their crews slept on the beach in the hot sunshine. With luck the *Roanoke* hoped to get to sea in a fortnight.

The boys were eager to swarm ashore, and the boats took them off in batches as soon as the odds and ends of work were finished. Now Blue River was a placid little town where nothing ever happened excepting the arrival of the fruit steamers which took on thousands of bunches of bananas from the lush plantations among the mountain valleys. This was the first trip of an American training ship to pick up logwood at this port, and the invasion of these scores of trim, well-mannered lads who wore the bluejackets' uniform was a sensational event.

The town turned out to see them and the welcome was cordial, but the population was mostly black.

There were a few stores, a church, a jail, a public hall, and two or three warehouses, but not a solitary motion-picture theater and no trolley cars for excursions into the country. A stroll of half an hour along the two or three streets lined with small houses and gardens of brilliant flowers and shrubs, and there was nothing more to do in Blue River. Even a young sailor with a prodigious appetite could hold only so many guavas, mangoes, and bananas. The stores sold groceries, clothing, hardware, and liquor in bottles. One of them had a bar in the rear and a screened porch with tables and chairs. This was the nearest thing to a saloon that could be found in Blue River, but it was more than enough.

Judson Wyman sauntered into the largest of the stores with several of his friends who had various small errands. He had noticed that the sign over the door bore the name of Crozier & Son. This was the firm whose name was painted on the banana warehouses, and on the lighters which were loading the *Roanoke* with logwood, and on the stern of the small towboat which fussed about the wharf and harbor. Evidently this Mr. Crozier was Blue River's captain of industry. Judson was wandering about in the store with the keen interest of a stranger to whom everything in a foreign port was interesting when a ruddy, hearty-looking man with iron-gray hair drove up in a handsome automobile. As he

entered the store he glanced at the boys, nodded in a friendly way, and passed into the office.

After using the telephone and giving some instructions to the stenographer and the bookkeeper, he swung around at his desk to gaze at the young Americans in Navy garb. They must have impressed him favorably, for he walked out and said to Judson Wyman:

"This is very pleasant for us, I assure you. The Lamson Line of New York which has an arrangement with your Shipping Board to carry cargo in these training steamers has been sending them to Cuba for sugar and to Haiti for logwood. Beastly hole, Haiti. You would detest it. Blue River is stupid and quiet, don't you know, but it is healthy and decent and all that."

Judson had never met an English colonial gentleman of this type, and he liked the easy courtesy and unassuming manner.

"I never dreamed that Jamaica was so beautiful, sir. I come from a prairie country where they grow blizzards in winter and wheat the rest of the year."

"Quite so. I positively shiver to think of it. Pardon me, I am Mr. Crozier. Sorry I was not here to meet your ship, but business compelled me to motor to Kingston. I shall tell your captain that I am very much at his service, and that includes making it comfortable for all you fine young sailors. Any suggestions to offer?"

"Yes, sir," promptly answered Judson, who had no idea of letting the opportunity slip. "We shall

have a good deal of liberty in port and a baseball field would make a big hit. The crowd is already talking about a game between teams from the deck and the engineers' gang. This landscape seems to be pretty well tipped on edge, but —"

"Baseball! To be sure! You Yankees can't live without it," exclaimed Mr. Crozier. "There is a level bit of grazing land quite close to the beach. We use it for an occasional cricket match. Supposing we go take a look at it. Bring your friends along."

Judson introduced his four shipmates who piled into the automobile. The field turned out to be a small pasture which Mr. Crozier used for his pedigreed dairy cows. The turf was close and smooth and the cricket players had rolled enough of it to make an excellent infield. Mr. Crozier seemed as pleased as a boy when Judson expressed his approval, and as they drove back to the town this thoughtful host exclaimed:

"You young men will be good enough to dine at my house to-night, I hope. It will be very informal. We really must take time to talk things over and organize a few stunts, as you say."

There was no hesitation. The five young sailormen accepted in grateful chorus. They were beginning to think better of Blue River. They had permission to stay ashore for the liberty boat that went off to the ship at nine o'clock in the evening, as they explained to Mr. Crozier. They rambled off to explore a suburb of fishermen's huts while

he finished the day's work. Very punctually they walked up the white limestone road which climbed the green hillside and came to a rambling house with wide porches. It commanded a noble view of the harbor and the shining sea beyond, and the *Roanoke* at anchor like a toy ship.

A young woman came across the lawn to meet the guests. With her fair hair and blue eyes and the tint of the roseleaf in her cheek, she was such a maid as might have walked in some walled garden of old England. Her demeanor was most gracious, her voice sweet and low as she greeted the visitors.

"It is so kind of you to come. I am Miss Crozier. My father has just now telephoned that he is detained with the captain of your steamer, but will be up very shortly. If you will tell me your names —"

They were delighted to oblige. In this brief space of time five critical young men had come to the same conclusion — that Miss Crozier was a wonder. It was a unanimous vote. She was easy to look at and she had the trick of making a fellow feel at home. Any sense of awkwardness was dispelled by her questions about the voyage and the training ship and their impressions of Jamaica. Two or three of them were talking at once. It was all smooth sailing as soon as she got them to chatting of their own affairs. They found themselves seated in an arbor canopied by tropical vines which bore huge crimson blossoms, and Miss Crozier listened attentively while they described the storm at sea. When they paused for breath she exclaimed:

"You must let my father hear it all over again. He is fond of the sea and young men of your kind are very close to his heart. My only brother, Gerald Crozier, joined the Royal Naval Reserve in 1914, and he was lost at Jutland, when the battle cruiser *Invincible* went down. Your American Navy and ours toiled and dared together, in the North Sea and the Atlantic, and we people of British blood can never forget such things."

"Your only brother," murmured Judson.

"My father's only boy," said Miss Crozier, and then she added brightly, "but this must not be a sorrowful dinner party. We are glad to do honor to the merchant service. It is always heroic, in war and peace."

Judson Wyman understood why Mr. Crozier was fond of young men who followed the sea and were ambitious to win honorable careers for themselves. Their host strolled out of the house soon after this, with apologies for his tardiness. He was dressed in cool white linen and seemed to have left all business cares in the office. Dinner was served on a breezy piazza with an awning for a roof, and it was all enjoyably different from the bare tables, the hasty meals, and the stuffy between-decks of the *Roanoke*. The guests conducted themselves with dignity and Mr. Crozier seemed to find them uncommonly entertaining. At length he said to his daughter:

"We are extraordinarily lucky, Edith. Mr. Wyman tells me that he and these friends of his are a sort of committee to keep the boys from being

bored and all that sort of thing. The captain said something to me about it. Now how can we play a part? They must have their baseball matches, and I shall operate personally conducted excursions to Golden Vale and through the mountain roads. The boys may like to see a big banana plantation or two and I can carry a lot of them in our own motor-trucks. Sounds like a lark, what?"

"Splendid," agreed the smiling daughter, "but the Americans simply cannot live without motion pictures. Why not send to Kingston for a man and a machine and show them in the town hall two or three nights a week? And it would be a rare treat for Blue River."

"Perfectly bully!" exclaimed her parent. "Anything else?"

"Of course. There ought to be pretty girls for them to dance with, and the moonlight in Jamaica weaves a magic all its own. But where shall we find the girls?"

"Rake the country for forty miles around and fetch 'em in," boomed Mr. Crozier, with a careless wave of the hand. "There are nice people enough if you go after them. Invite a dozen or so for a house party. Plenty of room, what?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, father. And most of them have motors. Consider a dance arranged."

Like gallant young sailors, the guests protested that Miss Crozier was quite enough and that if she did n't mind setting the phonograph going after dinner and would dance with each of them in turn,

it would be the great event of the cruise. This tribute was so gratifying that she laughingly consented, and because poor Judson had not learned to dance, he had to sit and look on and felt the twinges of jealousy. When they tore themselves away and tramped down the hill, one of the lads who had danced with Edith Crozier looked up at the young moon, heaved a sigh, and said:

"I never wasted my time on girls, but — oh, boy!"

"She thought you were just a sappy kid, you poor fish," returned another who was a year or so older and sported a faint smudge which he called a mustache.

"Talk sense, for heaven's sake," growled Judson. "She took pity on us, that's all. You might think you were somebody, to hear you drool. Let's get this ball team under way and trim that chesty black gang. They think it's going to be easy."

The youngest apprentice wrapped himself in profound thought and burst out, after a long silence:

"Say, Wyman, I may be a third officer in a year or so. And watch me climb after that. The salaries are bang-up nowadays. A man can afford to marry young."

Cruel laughter greeted this candid confession, and they guyed him without mercy all the way to the wharf. The crowd aboard the *Roanoke* was even more heartless when this unlucky speech was passed along. The sentimental young man was thereafter addressed as "Third Officer Briggs," and the fore-

castle quartet won applause with an original ballad which began:

"You can take it from me
That the salaree
Is quite enough to marry on
In this countree."

Matters much more serious were astir the next afternoon when the baseball candidates were permitted to go ashore for practice. All the other boys who could present good excuses to be relieved from duty went along to cheer or jeer the performance. Judson Wyman was no baseball star, besides which a stiffened shoulder still reminded him of the storm. It was agreed that he should be the manager of the nine from the deck division. As captain of the stokehole team, "Kid" Briscoe had elected himself.

There was no attempt to make a contest of it during this first afternoon. The players scattered about the field with bat and ball to take the kinks out of their muscles and to regain the feel of the land after the uneasy motion of the ship. It also offered a chance to size up the material and select the best men. There was snappy fielding and hard hitting among these gingery lads who had played in high school, in college, on army teams, and on town lots. "Kid" Briscoe still suffered pain from those burns, but his good right arm was undamaged and he was pitching a fast and vicious ball to a bow-legged catcher with a broken nose who had helped win a pennant for a battleship league of the Atlantic Fleet.

Judson had been told that the crack pitcher for his own team was undoubtedly the great Herbert Maddigan whose friends were loud in praise of his prowess on the diamond. In prep school he had been a celebrity, and he was pitching for the Princeton freshmen when the faculty had nipped him in the bud. The 'varsity coach had said splendid things about him and was all broken up when this baseball prodigy was compelled to leave college. All this was true because Maddigan said so himself. Although somewhat beefy, he was tall and strongly built and the voyage appeared to have put him in much better condition. Laying aside his personal dislike, Judson was ready to let him pitch against "Kid" Briscoe.

Maddigan was not in sight, however, during the first hour of practice and scouts were sent to find him. He had somehow obtained an introduction to Miss Edith Crozier, and when she walked down the path from her home to watch the ball players, he swaggered at her side. They halted at the edge of the field and Judson walked over to them. "Kid" Briscoe was standing within earshot and he seemed interested in the dialogue. A few pleasant words with the lovely Miss Crozier and Judson said, in sharper tones:

"Excuse me, Maddigan, but we have been waiting for you. If you expect to pitch, you will have to show us. We may play a game to-morrow."

With a shrug and a laugh, Maddigan replied, still gazing at Miss Crozier:

"I am the least of your worries, Wyman, old top.

I'll be with you directly. All I need is a little work with your catcher, to frame up signals and so on."

Judson flushed and bit his lip, but he held his temper as he exclaimed:

"This liberty was given us for ball practice. It is n't fair to the other fellows to loaf most of the afternoon."

Maddigan turned on him with an air of good-humored superiority. "Trot along, Wyman. Can't you see you are interrupting me? Even if we are a couple of sailors there is such a thing as good manners — "

It was Miss Crozier who interrupted this time and her eyes sparkled as she sweetly inquired:

"And you are an authority on good manners, Mr. Maddigan? How very interesting! Please don't let me detain you."

This was a dismissal so pointed that it pierced the conceit of the great Herbert Maddigan. He lingered no longer. As he walked out on the field, "Kid" Briscoe eyed him with black displeasure and followed Judson to say:

"I heard it. And I expected to see you smear him, but you could n't get rough in the presence of a lady. I know that much about manners myself. Maybe I was wrong in liking that bird, after all. He was a bad actor just now."

"Never mind that," answered Judson. "If he can pitch, I shall have to forgive him."

"He did n't win any promotion with the lady. I noticed that much," grinned Briscoe. "Even if you

and I are out to beat each other in a ball game, I can't stand for any rude language to my buddy."

Maddigan proceeded to show them that he could pitch. The hot sun made him perspire freely, and it was doubtful how long he could stand the pace without wilting, but he had speed and control and he handled himself like a veteran. Judson was too fair-minded to nurse a personal grudge and he tried to forget his resentment. The fact that Miss Crozier had rebuked Maddigan for his rudeness was very consoling. When the crowd returned to the ship, there was much cheerful boasting by the partisans of the two nines, each of which was absolutely certain of winning. The officers took sides, barring the captain, who had to be impartial. He had consented to act as umpire. If time and the weather permitted, it was to be a series of games, the best two in three.

This is a story of the sea and not of baseball, so the account really concerns the fortunes of Judson Wyman and a few of the others who played a part in that first game. The hero was "Kid" Briscoe, who went the full nine innings and pitched on his nerve and his courage when his strength began to ebb. While sliding to second he tore a bandage from his left arm and the blood spotted his sleeve, but he had it tied up again and laughed at the friends who told him to quit. From the coaching lines he infused his men with his own fiery, fighting spirit and they slammed the ball and stole bases like so many demons.

What wrecked the chances of Judson Wyman's team was the collapse of that peerless pitcher, Herbert Maddigan. For three innings he lived up to his own estimate of himself, and then he was an utter ruin. With the bases filled, he might have extricated himself by cool and steady work, for he had skill enough, but in a tight pinch he became wild and confused. Briscoe's unterrified sluggers drove in five runs before the agony ended and this won the game. Judson Wyman was hoping that Maddigan would steady down and regain his grip on himself, and he was reluctant to take him out and humiliate him before the crowd. It was Maddigan himself who refused to pitch another inning. The heat was too much for him, he complained, and he was n't used to playing with a gang of hoodlums who had no sporting spirit and yelled insults at him.

The truth was that the crowd had shrewdly discovered for itself what ailed the mighty Maddigan. He lacked heart for an uphill fight, and when the tide turned against him he was ready to quit. The pitcher who took his place was not at all showy, a solemn lad who chewed gum and had no nerves whatever, and he stolidly put the ball over as well as he knew how, but a stern chase was a long chase and he could not overcome a lead which resulted in a final score — Black Gang 8; Deck Division 4.

The next game of the series was postponed for one reason after another. Rain and wind made Blue River a dreary place for two days. Then the fat chief engineer decided to clean one boiler and re-

place several tubes. This required the services of "Kid" Briscoe and several of his ball players. After that the chief officer, Mr. Snow, discovered that the ship needed a prodigious amount of work with paint-pot and brush. In his opinion, she looked like a condemned old mud-scow. This made paint-spattered slaves of many of the deck force, and the boys went ashore in small groups instead of a hilarious mob of baseball fans.

Meanwhile the hospitable Mr. Crozier had been as good as his word, what with automobile excursions and motion pictures for the young seamen, as often as he could lay hands on a group of them. The dance was to be a famous affair, for a bevy of American girls had been discovered in a hotel of a winter resort in the mountains where lively young men were exceedingly scarce. Needless to say, they accepted the invitation to motor to Blue River. Judson Wyman had called at the Crozier house one evening to talk over certain details of the dance, such as the selection of a floor committee from among his shipmates. Miss Crozier happened to be alone, and it occurred to her to ask, in a delightfully confidential manner:

"What can you tell me about Mr. Maddigan? My first impressions were rather unfortunate. He is not a friend of yours, I am sure of that."

"After that baseball game?" scowled Judson. "He threw it away. I ought to have known better, but I was anxious to give him a square deal. All we fellows know about him is what he says himself.

He has made no trouble ashore, so far as I know, and that is a happy disappointment."

"And you are very keen about the honor of the ship, I understand," reflected Edith Crozier. "I dislike the rôle of tale-bearer, Mr. Wyman, but this Maddigan person cares nothing about the honor of the *Roanoke* and her crew of fine young American sailors. My father is interested, as you know, and very little that goes on in Blue River escapes him. Maddigan and his intimate friends have been buying a great deal of whiskey and rum in bottles — here and there and two or three bottles at once — but not from Crozier & Son, I assure you."

"They are not drinking it," exclaimed Judson, who was puzzled for the moment. "And I don't see how it can be smuggled aboard the ship, with the gangways watched so closely."

"They must intend to hide it on board," observed Miss Crozier, "or what could the object be? Meanwhile they have stored it somewhere in town, I presume."

"To sell in Newport News at a tremendous profit, if they can sneak the stuff past the Custom House inspectors," blurted Judson, finding a plausible solution of the riddle.

"Precisely that," agreed Miss Crozier. "I guessed it at once because there has been more trouble of the same sort with the crews of the fruit steamers that call here for bananas."

"The honor of the ship," mused Judson, thrashing the thing over in his mind. "And Maddigan would

put a black stain on it for the sake of dirty dollars. Yes, I can imagine him thinking such a game mighty clever. And he needs the money to make a noise with."

"Yes, he would enjoy splurging about," said the girl. "A bounder, we call that type. My father has said nothing about this to your captain. It is mere suspicion, don't you know, and there is nothing illegal in buying liquor in Jamaica. I wish with all my heart we had a prohibition law in the island. Your country has set an admirable example."

Judson scarcely heard what she said. It was a rare compliment that Miss Crozier should care to talk to him as one who was vitally interested in the honor of the ship and the flag it flew, but he was more intent on the problem which confronted him. Should he go running to the captain of the *Roanoke* with a tale which, as Miss Crozier said, was suspicion, not evidence? And who else besides Maddigan was entangled in this miserable plot? Maddigan could not undertake such a thing without help, both ashore and on shipboard. There was "Kid" Briscoe, for instance, ready for any reckless escapade, who might think it a smart piece of work to try his hand at smuggling and thereby pick up some easy money. Judson hated himself for such a surmise, but he could not banish it from his thoughts. With a troubled smile he said to Miss Crozier:

"It is not very pleasant to think of playing the spy on my own shipmates, but I promised Captain Nickerson to do what I could to give the ship a clean

record in Blue River. Will you think any less of me if I try to get at the bottom of this disgraceful business?"

"I should admire you even more than I do now, Mr. Wyman," was the gracious verdict which set his doubts at rest and made his course seem clear. Just before he said good-night she told him:

"It is always manly and noble, I think, to be jealous of the good name of one's own command, whether it is a ship or a regiment or a squadron, and to endeavor to defend it."

This made Judson feel more like a knight-errant than a spy, and he marched down the hill with his chin in the air. Presently, however, the cloud of unhappiness returned and Briscoe, James E., was the cause of it. There had been one misunderstanding between them and now another issue seemed near. There had been something odd in Briscoe's sudden intimacy with Maddigan during the southerly voyage. With a sigh Judson recalled a certain argument in a shadowy street of Newport News. Talking it over with Briscoe probably meant another black eye and a few loose teeth. And yet after the adventure of the storm there had been mutual trust and confidence.

"I had better tell him what I know and have it over with," said Judson to himself. "And I can't believe he will be anything else than on the level."

## CHAPTER VIII

### A PLOT TO SMUGGLE RUM

WHEN Judson Wyman returned to the ship, the decks were quiet and almost deserted. Many of the crew had turned in, and he was about to go to the firemen's quarters in search of Briscoe when the voice of that troublesome young man hailed him from the darkness forward.

"Hello, Jud! Wait a minute. I caught sight of you by the light at the gangway. Making me lose my good sleep while you overstay your shore leave?"

"Special permission, for one night only," replied Judson as he walked in the direction of the voice. "It will be some dance. Miss Crozier sends you a personal invitation, as the dashing destroyer man of the outfit. And her father says, 'hands across the sea, what, what?'"

"You are joshing me," gravely returned Briscoe, as they hunted a breezy corner, "and when a serious-minded man like you gets frivolous, it's no joke. There is something I want to say to you. It's strictly between us as buddies, and I need to get your slant on the situation."

"Steam ahead. The night is still young," said Judson, and he could not have explained why he felt much happier. It was a sort of intuition that things

were about to come right between Briscoe and himself, and that there would be no more head-on collisions. The hard-boiled sea rover took a turn across the deck and back before he said:

"You could n't fathom why I fooled around with Bert Maddigan after declaring myself in favor of using violence on him. Well, he amused me, Jud, and it was like a free picture show to let him rave about Palm Beach and plutocrats and the well-known leisure class. And as a college cut-up he was the star comedian of the campus."

"Yes, I noticed that he had you hypnotized," commented Judson.

"Far from it, son. A wise guy like me? I'll be honest, though — he did twist my bearings a little. But I came out of the trance at the ball game. This Maddigan was as yellow as a canary. And do you remember the day before that, when he made that crack at you in front of Miss Crozier? I had his number right then."

"And you decided to drop him from your calling list?" said Judson, quite sure that something more was coming.

"I'd enjoy dropping him overboard, with a couple of two-foot Stilson wrenches tied to his neck to make him float," declared Briscoe, James E., with much vehemence. "All of which chatter leads up to the big scene of the third act. Maddigan is a bright boy, and as a promoter he could sell oil stock in bushel baskets. A syndicate, that's what he called the job he put up. You can buy rum,

whiskey, and gin in Blue River for one dollar and fifty cents per quart bottle. In Newport News the thirsty outlaws fall over themselves to hand you ten or twelve dollars a quart for it."

"What if the ship should be searched, Kid? How did Maddigan expect to guard against that?"

"I was to be the artful hero," confessed Briscoe. "Maddigan was to leave it to me to hide the stuff in the double bottom, in the coal bunkers, and various other places where Sherlock Holmes himself could n't track it. Two hundred dollars was coming to me as my bit, Jud, and it looked like big money. I know what's on your mind. Ease up and let's have it. Why did n't I repel the villain's advances with scorn?"

"Of course, I can't see why you listened to such a scheme," admitted Judson, "but that is because I can't always follow your curves. Far be it from me to preach, so let 's hear the rest of it."

"Listen, Jud," implored Briscoe, with real emotion. "Who calls it a crime to put one over on the Custom House flatties? Read the daily papers and find out. Who smuggles the lace and jewelry and Paris dresses off the liners in New York? Rich people that can afford to pay duties. They set a lovely example for a poor devil of a fireman like me! What was Maddigan telling me? His own aunt brought in stuff that should have paid eight thousand dollars, diamonds sewed in her skirts. And her friends thought she was a cutey for turning the trick. Oh, I'm not trying to build up an alibi,

but I was n't losing much sleep over the right and wrong of it."

Judson waited patiently while Briscoe leaned on the rail with his chin in his hands and stared at the lights on the distant wharf. It was not easy for the boy from the quiet home and the sheltered life of the small town in North Dakota to get the point of view of this buddy of his, but he had already learned to be slow in passing judgment. He ventured to say:

"I follow you so far, James E., and it's not hard to understand how Maddigan threw you off your course. But what is the idea of telling me about it, and what do you propose to do now?"

"What switched me?" exclaimed Briscoe as he spat over the side. "Have n't I told you? Because he is a pup. Was n't that ball game enough? If anything should go wrong with this get-rich-quick scheme of his, can you see him taking his medicine? Will he stand the gaff? Not in a thousand years. The goat would be one Briscoe, James E."

"Those are words of wisdom, old man," said Judson, "but I am sure you have another motive up your sleeve. You honestly don't feel happy at mixing up in such a dirty business."

"Well, I am soft enough to want to keep a good conduct rating with you, Jud, you solemn old parson. I'll go as far as that. But don't you interfere in this Maddigan affair, understand? No tipping him off to drop his part of Bad Bert the Bold Smuggler of Jamaica. Leave him to me.

There is more than one score to settle. He has even sewed young Charlie Trask up — scared him into playing errand boy and helping buy the stock of booze. God knows what he threatened to do to him — throw him overboard some dark night at sea, or something like that."

Judson had nothing more to say. If he should meddle with the affair at all, it would be dishonorable, for Briscoe had told him all this in confidence. There were stormy times ahead for Maddigan, no doubt of that, and Judson's only duty in the matter was to watch for the chance and try to keep timid, well-meaning little Charlie Trask clear of the consequences. Once on the war-path, "Kid" Briscoe would be apt to leave no scalps unturned.

It was Briscoe himself who volunteered a bit of advice, two or three days later:

"Be sure that Charlie Trask goes to the dance, Jud, even if you have to drag him ashore by the collar. Promise, will you?"

"He'll be there," answered Judson, who asked no questions.

All signs indicated that the dance would be a memorable event in the social annals of Blue River. The captain and most of the officers of the ship had accepted invitations, and the boys spent much of their spare time in pressing uniforms, polishing shoes, and getting hair-cuts. It was a perfect night, cool and starlit, when the boats shoved off leaving the chief officer in charge of the deck. "Kid" Briscoe was on watch in the fire-room where one

boiler made steam for the pumps and the dynamos, but he slipped on deck to whisper to Judson at the gangway:

"Charlie Trask goes with you, I see. Keep him away from Maddigan this evening. That's all. Now jazz it up, son, and enjoy yourself."

Trask had protested and almost wept, declaring that he hated dances and wanted to stay on board, but Judson had threatened to spank him and otherwise behaved like a tyrant. He dropped only one hint, and it made the misguided Trask subside in worried obedience:

"If you have n't sense enough to keep out of disgrace, Charlie, I shall have to attend to it for you."

While the crowded boats were pulling shoreward, they passed a lighter with a deckload of logwood which appeared to have stranded on a shoal midway between the beach and the ship. This happened now and then, and if the towboat was not handy the black lightermen rowed ashore in a skiff and returned at high water next morning. In this instance, however, the big flatboat had her crew on board. Their voices came across the quiet water and a lantern burned at the top of a pole. Captain Nickerson was in the yawl with Judson who heard him explain to the second mate:

"The lighter will float in a couple of hours and they expect to sweep her alongside and discharge. The cargo has been coming off so slowly that Mr. Crozier is putting on a night shift of niggers. The

ship can't stay here until she rots, waiting for a few hundred tons of logwood. This is a training cruise."

Judson listened idly, and would have thought no more about it, but Charlie Trask, who sat beside him, turned to gaze back at the shadowy loom of the lighter long after the yawl had passed it. He started to say something, stammered, checked himself, and merely shook his head when Judson wanted to know what ailed him. From the wharf the young seamen of the *Roanoke* marched two and two to the town hall, led by the bugler and a borrowed drum. Once inside the building they broke ranks and were promptly captured by their British friends. There were motherly chaperons to make them feel at home and to introduce them to a flock of girls so charming and agreeable that they felt ashamed of themselves for guying young "Third Officer Briggs" who had lost his heart in Jamaica.

The walls were gay with flags and bunting and the Union Jack was intertwined with the Stars and Stripes. The red-coated band of the Royal Field Artillery garrison at Kingston played dance music with a lilt and a swing and a joyful racket until the shyest lad could n't keep his feet still. And if he knew little about dancing there were pretty girls quite anxious to teach him. The lion among the ladies was easily Herbert Maddigan, and if his manner was a trifle patronizing you must remember that he was accustomed to ballroom floors and gilded society. And if one or two of these colonial maidens unkindly giggled when his back was turned,

it was because they failed to appreciate him at his true worth. He was gallantly devoting himself to Edith Crozier, who had made some perfectly good excuse for not dancing with him, when he happened to catch sight of Charlie Trask. They had come ashore in different boats. Mr. Maddigan looked as though he had swallowed a tack. His expression was so pained and his eye so glassy that Miss Crozier was afraid he was about to disturb the dance by having a fit. To her anxious query he blurted:

"Yes, yes, perfectly all right, thank you. Awfully hot in here. Pardon me, but I must speak to a chap. Very important."

He bowled across the floor at full speed, but Judson saw him coming. Charlie Trask was instantly presented to the nearest girl, who dutifully whirled him away in the dance which began at that moment. Maddigan followed them and he perspired copiously. Curiously watching him, Edith Crozier decided that the symptoms were really and truly those of apoplexy. He had looked something like this when he had been batted out of the box in that fatal third inning of the baseball game. The girl who danced with Charlie Trask was tall and vigorous, and she set a pace so fast that Maddigan no sooner got near them than they were somewhere else. And when they did pause for breath, Judson was on the spot to say, very courteously:

"Excuse me, but may I cut in? Miss Crozier wants to see you right away, Charlie. On your way."

Charlie hurried, of course, to obey Miss Crozier's slightest whim, and Maddigan was unable to overtake him. It turned into a sort of game. Evidently Edith Crozier passed the word among the other girls that Maddigan was to be kept away from Trask. One winsome Yankee damsel led Maddigan out for a stroll in the starlight, but he was found to be glum and absent-minded company. After what seemed to him hours and hours of nervous agitation, he did manage to elude the fair conspirators and stole out of a side door. Judson Wyman saw the maneuver and followed as far as the nearest street that led down to the beach. He watched Maddigan break into a run and vanish in the soft obscurity of the shade trees. Returning to the hall, Judson called Charlie Trask aside and said, in the friendliest manner:

"Maddigan was very much surprised to see you here. It is none of my business, but had n't you ought to thank me for coaxing you out of the ship to-night? The beans are spilled, and that is what Maddigan guessed the moment he set eyes on you."

"If he thinks I gave the game away — I — I don't know what he will do to me," faltered the youngster, who was fairly unstrung with terror. "What do you mean — the beans are spilled?"

"You know more about it than I do, Charlie, but your friend Maddigan was a sick-looking lobster when he sneaked out of here just now and beat it for the wharf to find out what had gone wrong with his bright little plot. If you want real friends

who will stand by, you had better cut loose from that gang, the sooner the quicker."

Trask hung his head and his lip quivered. Judson had no idea of putting the screws on him to wring out a confession. To warn the boy and to offer help and comfort — this was the purpose, and all the rest of it would be left to the competent Briscoe, according to agreement. A hand-clasp and Judson told the remorseful Charlie to whirl in and give the girls a good time.

Surprising as it may sound, the dance went on with gayety undimmed after the great Herbert Maddigan had so strangely withdrawn his presence. While the artillery bandsmen tooted and fiddled and blared, he was frantically running about the town in search of a negro boatman who would put him off to the *Roanoke*. Alas, the natives were too entranced by the strains of melody which floated from the hall. They were dancing on the pavement of the public market or ragging it on the smooth white streets. Nobody listened to the earnest appeals of Maddigan who waved a five-dollar bill in his fist. Wearily he trudged back to the wharf and leaned against a piling while he gazed at the distant lights of his ship. Music had no charms to soothe his manly breast.

A young man whose emotions were far more tranquil at this moment was Briscoe, James E., who had just completed what he called "a snappy night's work." There had been no commotion aboard the *Roanoke*, no faces to be pushed by those expert knuckles of the middle-weight champion of the

destroyer flotilla. This was mildly disappointing, and yet virtue was its own reward. He had loafed alone in the fire-room until after nine o'clock. In the engine-room the second assistant dozed with a magazine in his lap. Then Briscoe had stepped to an open port because the tide was at the flood.

As he expected, the lighter which had gone aground before dark was now working off and he could hear the splash of the long oars. It had been smart of Maddigan to bribe the negro foreman of the lighter crew to stick on that shoal so that the clumsy craft would be brought alongside in the evening. Briscoe lounged at the round port until the lighter was made fast to the ship. Then he changed his position to another of the windows in the side of the ship, and the lighter was directly beneath him.

The roustabouts began to pass the rough logwood sticks to be piled on deck, and they sang as they sweated and toiled. Presently one of them moved nearer the open port and boomed in a mellow bass a snatch of that wicked old forecastle ditty, "The Hog-Eye Man." As soon as he ceased singing it, Briscoe whistled the refrain. It was the signal and the password as prearranged.

In the darkness outside, for the lantern had been smashed by accident or otherwise, the negro with the mellow voice lay flat upon his stomach and groped in a corner of the lighter. From a pile of bark and litter which had been covered with a bit of tarpaulin he withdrew a package wrapped in straw that

gurgled when he lifted it. Warily he slid around the lighter's deckload of logwood and flattened himself against the side of the lofty *Roanoke*. Again Briscoe whistled a few bars of "The Hog-Eye Man." The dusky figure outside pushed the liquid package through the open port-hole and Briscoe caught it from his hands. Carefully laying it down, Briscoe waited for another package of the same kind. They came through the port swiftly, methodically, until there must have been several dozen of them in all.

As Maddigan had ingeniously planned the performance, Briscoe was to cover the merchandise with pieces of lumber or anything else that might come to hand. This would hide it from any passer-by, and there would be plenty of time during the night to carry it down into the fire-room and safely stow it all away. Charlie Trask had been assigned to act as a lookout and see that the coast was clear whenever Briscoe made his journeys below with a couple of packages under his shirt. If things went well, they would try to send thirty or forty more quart bottles off in a lighter a few nights later.

Perhaps you can understand why the enterprise had appealed to the careless and happy-go-lucky temper of "Kid" Briscoe, the rolling stone. It was ingenious and risky, a game worth playing for the fun of it, with a handsome reward thrown in. What troubled him just now was the notion that it was a low trick to turn informer, even on Herbert Maddigan. He solved the problem according to his own

code of behavior, by switching on the electric light in the compartment upon the floor of which the straw-jacketed packages were laid all in a row. Then he hooked the door back and strolled on deck.

Now Mr. Snow was a most zealous, active, and painstaking chief officer, particularly when he was left in charge of the ship. It was his habit to make a hasty inspection tour every hour or so, instead of idling forward, and as he passed along his sharp eye was apt to note the most trivial details. The wily Briscoe proposed to let Mr. Snow discover the unholy exhibit for himself. It was not long before the chief officer swung himself down from the upper deck and took a look around. In a passageway an open door and a bright light caught his attention. All the stuff had been removed from that store-room, thought he, so that it could be repainted. It had been closed earlier in the evening. With most of the people ashore, who could have turned on the light and fastened the door open and why? He halted and glanced in.

Just then "Kid" Briscoe, who had dodged below to look at his fires and gauges, bobbed up again and was near enough to hear Mr. Snow's startled exclamation as he picked up one of the suspicious packages, sniffed it, and shook it.

"Bless my soul, what sort of a condemned rum-shop have I stumbled into?" he cried. "Come here, Briscoe. Know anything about this lay-out?"

"Yes, sir," spoke the truthful fireman as he entered the room. "It was comical, Mr. Snow. There

was a nice breeze drawing through this port and I drifted in for a minute to listen to a nigger with a bully voice that was singing on the lighter. First thing you know, one of the Jamaica darkies slides something through the port and it would have busted on deck if I had n't caught it. I set the souvenir down and had just straightened up when another bottle of intoxicating liquor was poked at me. I took 'em right off the bat, sir, as fast as they came, and there you are."

Mr. Snow removed his white cap and mopped his slightly bald head with a crumpled handkerchief. He gazed first at Briscoe and then at the rows of bottles so neatly arrayed in their straw garments. Strange things were always happening at sea, as he well knew, but this fairly stumped him. Briscoe was not lying; of this he was convinced. Finally the pent-up emotions of this excellent chief officer exploded in these words:

"Holy jumping mackerel! I have kept the ship clear of the cursed stuff, and now look at this! Those black outlaws on the lighter were standing in with somebody on board, but the scheme missed fire. I have to believe your preposterous yarn, Briscoe, for you certainly were not trying to get away with this liquor. I'll just hop aboard that lighter and find out what I can."

The wrathful Mr. Snow surged out of the passageway and the virtuous Briscoe, James E., climbed down several iron ladders to his stifling post of duty in the fire-room. He thought he knew precisely what

would happen on that lighter, for the chief officer was a forceful man. The ship was quiet and Mr. Snow was pacing the bridge and looking at the stars two hours later when the ship's boats pulled out from shore. In one of them was Herbert Maddigan, who had been found waiting at the wharf. The enthusiastic chatter about the dance found no echo of response from him. Silently he climbed aboard the ship and vainly sought to find "Kid" Briscoe. This was the last straw. Young Mr. Maddigan went to his bunk and kicked off his shoes, but he was in no mood for sleep.

He was wide awake some time later when Mr. Snow came prowling through the quarters and halted to say, very curtly:

"Come out of this, Maddigan. On the run, now! The captain wants to see you in his room."

Maddigan groaned and tumbled out to find his trousers. He was full of dark forebodings that his career in the merchant service was about to be blighted. The chief officer waited grimly, like an assistant executioner, and offered no words of consolation. Maddigan dressed hastily and appeared much less natty than usual when he was led forward to the captain's room just below the bridge. Upon the table and the locker stood in orderly rows the bottles which were to have been sold in Newport News for ten or twelve dollars each by the Maddigan Syndicate, Limited. In his thoughtful way Captain Nickerson said to the chief officer:

"Excellent work, Mr. Snow. You persuaded that

black rascal on the lighter to confess to the whole infernal bag of tricks?"

"Yes, sir. I had him on his knees before I finished and his skin was bleached three shades lighter. Maddigan was behind it all. I can't tell what other boys were in it with him. Very few, I imagine, for he has n't many chums."

"Very few of my boys would be guilty of such deviltry," said the captain, rather sadly, "but one rotten egg may spoil a basket. I don't know that I am interested in finding out who Maddigan bamboozled into joining him. He was merely using them as tools. I think I know him pretty well by now. Anything to say for yourself, Maddigan?"

"A whole lot, Captain Nickerson," shouted the culprit who had suddenly come out of his trance. "What does your evidence amount to? How can you prove that I had anything to do with it? I can make it hot for you, let me tell you. Wait till my father hears of this outrage. You 'll never get command of another ship — "

"That's enough, quite enough," gently interrupted the skipper. "Take him away and lock him in the brig, Mr. Snow, and keep him there during the homeward-bound voyage. Then I shall report him at Camp Stuart for a dishonorable dismissal from the sea training service."

## CHAPTER IX

### JUDSON FINDS AN OLD FRIEND

THE *Roanoke* was steaming northward, homeward-bound, and the misty mountains of Jamaica had vanished in the sea which rolled astern. There were pleasant memories of Blue River and some sighs and broken hearts, of course, among the young mariners who had danced in the town hall. Those whose symptoms were acute scribbled letters which they were careful to hide from the scoffing eyes of their shipmates. Others had milder attacks of this sentimental malady and might have been seen walking the deck alone or absently gazing at the foaming wake of the ship. They were not pining away, however, and they demolished food three times a day with the greatest gusto, so too much sympathy would be wasted. Such broken hearts as these mend rapidly.

Judson Wyman kept his thoughts to himself, but he knew that he would give a great deal to see Edith Crozier again. She had inspired no foolish fancies, but he felt a glow of loyal devotion whenever her bright image filled his mind. It was a steadfast determination to be worthy of her regard, to win the spurs of knighthood. She was much more to him than a delightful episode of a voyage to a foreign port. She had been his partner, in a way, in trying to keep the honor of the ship un-

marred. "Kid" Briscoe was keen enough to form his own conclusions and to guess that his solid old buddy would not soon forget the fair hostess of Blue River, but he was careful to steer clear of the subject and thereby displayed the tact of a gentleman.

What you might have called an unpleasant souvenir of Blue River was that fallen prince of good fellows, the deflated balloon known as Herbert Maddigan. Secluded in the brig, he appeared on deck for an hour each day in custody of the master-at-arms, who walked him up and down for the sake of exercise and appeared very much bored with the job. There was no more sociability for Maddigan, and if he wished to proclaim what a perfect corker of a fellow he was, he had to tell it to himself. The grumpy master-at-arms saw to it that there was no other audience. The disgrace was rather pitiful, and many of the boys felt sorry for the forlorn, unhappy Maddigan who had lost all his swagger, but the general opinion seemed to be that it served him right.

As a public example, this culprit was improving the whole spirit and tone of the ship. There was a strong feeling of pride in making a good record and of thankfulness that it had not been smirched. Captain Nickerson said as much to Judson Wyman, who refused to accept any credit that did not belong to him.

"Miss Crozier and her father made it easy to look after the crowd, sir, when they were on the

beach. And most of them were anxious to please *you*."

This frank compliment pleased the skipper, who said, with a quizzical glance:

"That's nice, Wyman. And do I have to thank you for fetching Maddigan up with a round turn?"

"Putting a crimp in the wholesale liquor business?" innocently inquired Judson. "Why, I was at the dance that night. I had nothing to do with it, sir."

"You are about as satisfactory as Briscoe," was the captain's comment. "Perhaps we had better call it a mystery of the sea and let it go at that."

There was no mystery, however, in the changed behavior of young Charlie Trask. He had awakened from a bad dream, and was freed of the unfortunate influence of Herbert Maddigan, who had somehow both fascinated and terrorized him. He was profoundly ashamed of it, this was apparent, and he was anxious to redeem himself in the sight of his shipmates. Bravely he fought down his timidity and the spells of seasickness that still distressed him. It so happened that he was working on deck one afternoon when a middle-aged, burly fireman came up from below and stood scowling and muttering to himself instead of passing along to his quarters. He was a Dane whom the boys in the engineer's division had found patient and helpful during the southward-bound voyage.

More recently, however, he had been complaining of the heat in the fire-room. His head hurt him,

he said, and twice he had fainted while on watch. But there was nothing to indicate that he had been crazed by the intense heat until this outbreak on deck. Charlie Trask, busy with a deck-mop and a pail of suds, happened to be the only sailor near enough to notice the curious conduct of the Dane, who was talking violently to himself and shaking his fists at imaginary enemies. Charlie straightened up and leaned on his mop-handle, more puzzled than frightened, until he saw the wild-eyed fireman pull a long and heavy steel wrench from inside his overalls. It was a weapon which could have cracked a man's skull with one blow. Charlie Trask's mouth hung open and his knees trembled. He never even thought of yelling an alarm. His mop of carroty hair began to stand on end as he heard the dangerous Dane announce, while he flourished the wrench:

"Da big chief engineer, I vill smash him *so*, while he ain't lookin'. Da skipper, I vill bust him yust like eggshells, *so*. Den I vill yump myself overboard and cool my brains vot is all turned to red-hot clinkers."

The sensible thing for Charlie Trask was to remove himself by putting one foot rapidly in front of the other, but he lingered spellbound a moment too long, and the poor maniac suddenly became aware of him.

"Yah, you leetle freckle-face devil, I fix *you*," was the ferocious outburst. "You go tell da skipper quick to put me in irons, uh?"

The Dane was powerful enough to break Charlie

Trask in two across his knee and the insane rage which contorted his face was terrifying to behold. But instead of taking to his heels, the boy stood rooted in his tracks, nor was it panic fear that held him. He was getting over that. His knees had ceased to knock together and his open mouth had clamped itself tight. Just as the murderous fireman lunged at him with the wrench upraised, Charlie Trask emitted a shrill war-whoop and surged into action himself.

Snatching up the pail of suds, he dashed the soapy stuff straight into the lunatic's eyes. It was a blinding deluge which spoiled the intention of knocking the head off "the leetle freckle-face devil," and caused a tremendous explosion of profanity in mixed Danish and English. The fireman dropped the wrench and dug his knuckles into his smarting eyes. Considering the battle only half won, Charlie Trask danced up to him and swung that deck-mop of his like a flail. Whenever it hit, there was the sound of a solid thump. The Dane was banged over the head until he threw up his arms to shield himself, and then the heavy end of the mop-handle smote him a crack on the funny-bone. Unable to see, he was unable also to understand what had happened to him, but it was more like a tornado than anything else.

His legs gave way and he crumpled to the deck in a sitting posture, stupidly blinking at the energetic Charlie Trask. The Dane could have been no more amazed if a rabbit had bitten him. Just then the second mate, the boatswain, and half a dozen boys

came rushing upon the scene. They had heard the commotion, particularly the yell of Charlie Trask the warrior. Just why he was trying to beat an inoffensive fireman to death with a mop-handle was a bit perplexing, but as they halted uncertainly they heard young Trask imploring them:

"Grab him quick, before he gets started again. He is bug-house — said he was going to kill the captain and the chief — and then throw himself overboard — "

This was explanation enough. The Dane was subdued in a twinkling, no dangerous task, for there was no more fight in him. He was weeping and rubbing the lumps on his head when the master-at-arms came running up with the handcuffs and led him forward to be secured in a room. He was not nearly as much of a sensation as the meek and lowly Charlie Trask who found a crowd surrounding him. He tried to tell the details, but the reaction was too much for his nerves. His voice broke, he faltered and asked them please to leave him alone. Catching sight of Judson Wyman, he turned toward him as a friend in need, with an unspoken appeal which prompted Judson to take him by the arm and convoy him to a more secluded part of the deck. Consumed with curiosity as Judson was, he asked no questions and let Charlie ramble on in a somewhat incoherent manner as though his own wits were scrambled.

"Remember when we came East together in the train with the other recruits, Wyman? You grabbed

Kid Briscoe and took all the fight out of him. I thought it was great stuff — you were a big man to me — they always called me a coward in school because I dodged a scrap if I saw it first — and there was always some boy ready to pick a fight just for the fun of licking the tar out of me — "

"Why hold this post-mortem?" Judson soothingly suggested. "It does n't get you anywhere. If it will comfort you any, I'll say that Kid Briscoe whipped me in a fair stand-up fight before we left Newport News. But it is not worth moaning about."

"I was trying to explain," almost blubbered Charlie. "Bert Maddigan was clever enough to guess that I was a coward, and you know the rest. I'm sure you do. And I could n't see any use in living, and I intended to quit the sea and go back to my job in the store — for a man can be a coward and still sell shoes at retail. But he won't last long in a ship, will he?"

"See here, Charlie, that was all morbid nonsense," lectured Judson. "I knew there was good stuff in you when you refused to give up to seasickness. You are not the only fellow that Maddigan made a fool of. You are not very husky, and just because a man is no rough-and-tumble bruiser it does n't follow that he is yellow."

"Anyhow, I was no good, Wyman. And when that crazy fireman broke loose just now, I was scared perfectly stiff. I can't tell you how it felt. And it flashed into my mind that if he did kill me, it was good riddance and it might save some bet-

ter man from getting hurt. Here goes nothing — that is what something said inside of me — and it sounds ridiculous, but I felt happy. Honestly I did. It was all in a second or two, I suppose — the way they say a drowning man sees his life flash by like a moving picture. And here was useless little Charlie Trask, afraid of his shadow, ready to wade into that big brute of a fireman. I tell you I could see myself just like that, Wyman, and if he laid me out, as I expected, the crowd would have a decent word for me. And so I let him have the bucket of suds. Poor cuss, I'm sorry I hurt him, but if he had once run amuck with that wrench it would have been terrible."

"I guess you won't have to worry about what the crowd thinks of you," declared the admiring Judson. "But, look here, you little holy terror, don't forget that I am a friend of yours. If I happen to displease you, give me a chance to apologize, for heaven's sake, before you tear into me. If you don't watch out, you will be a second edition of my great-grandfather, Captain William Lancaster. I have told you about him. The rougher they came the better he liked it, and the bigger they were the harder they fell."

"Now you are joshing me," said Charlie Trask, quite in his normal manner. "Seriously, Wyman, I have decided not to quit the sea. There may be a chance for me yet. To-day has been a turning-point in my life. A sailor simply has to be ready to face emergencies. At last I have faced one and I

think I came out on top. Does that sound conceited?"

"Not a bit of it, Charlie. What you need more than anything else is confidence and a better opinion of yourself, the two things that Maddigan did n't need at all. As for coming out on top, that damaged fireman will agree that you did. Now buck up and go tell the yarn to the crowd. They are simply pop-eyed to hear all about the speedy apprentice, the daffy fireman, and the bucket of suds."

The respect of his shipmates was the most precious thing in the world to Charlie Trask, and this bit of notoriety did not turn his head in the least. He was the same quiet, inoffensive lad, always ready to run an errand or do a favor, but he no longer hung his head. Manliness was the word that fitted him. The crowd perceived the difference and put the stamp of approval on him by giving him a new nickname. During the rest of the voyage he was known as "Sudsy" Trask. Nothing could have gratified him more than this.

The steamer crossed the Gulf Stream in a long slant and began to pick up the coastwise lights of home. The wind had the tang of winter and the stars sparkled with a hard and frosty brilliancy. It was no more than a chilly breath out of the northeast, with much milder days to follow, but the boys shivered when it touched them and they moved at a livelier gait. It turned their thoughts to the end of the cruise and the uncertain, unknown future

beyond it. A fatherly government had sheltered and fed and taught them, and now they were to be turned adrift, every lad for himself, to win or lose on his merits, to do a man's work and accept a man's responsibilities. About all they could have told you was that they expected to sign on in foreign-bound ships as ordinary seamen or second-class firemen and take the hard knocks as they came.

As a man experienced in the ways of the sea, "Kid" Briscoe took it upon himself to discuss the future with Judson Wyman, who was as fine as they made them, in the opinion of a hard-boiled guy, but in some ways still as green as grass.

"It's this way, Jud. This voyage has been one happy picnic all through. You know what I mean. Hand-picked officers who treat you right, no more than work enough to go round, the whole show a seagoing kindergarten. Perfectly proper. That's what these ships are for. But it's like going to college or some such foolish place. When you get out, you find that you have a lot to learn. It won't trouble *you* much to go against the rough side of seafaring, for you have sand and ambition and the strength of a pair of mules, but there is no sense in making it any harder than you have to."

"I intended to ask your advice, Briscoe, James E.," said Judson, with an affectionate smile.

"Then before you sign on, let me look about for a good ship, Jud. You will have to join the union, and it's full of foreign seamen and you won't enjoy

herding with 'em. And they are n't interested in seeing American boys get ahead. They can make it pretty rotten for you."

"Why can't we go in the same ship?" warmly exclaimed Judson.

"Just what I was hoping you'd say," admitted Briscoe, with a sort of diffidence that was oddly unlike him. "I did n't want to crowd myself on you. All right, then. Leave it to me. I've been going to school myself this voyage, with engineers that treated me like a human being. And I can qualify as a water-tender or oiler. Across the Western Ocean, eh, buddy?"

"A North Atlantic voyage for us. You said it," agreed Judson, recalling the farewell message of his great-grandfather, Captain "Stormy Bill" Lancaster. "That is where you learn real sailoring."

The *Roanoke* sighted the red dab of a lightship that marked the gateway of the Capes of the Chesapeake and turned to follow the channel to Hampton Roads and the wharves of Newport News. The eighty boys crowded along the rails and felt that they had been away a long, long time. They knew what the sea was like, in fair weather and foul, and they had been in a tropic port among the cocoanuts and the bananas and the parakeets. They were ever so much wiser than the batch of ignorant boys who were waiting at Camp Stuart to take their places in the *Roanoke*. The ship's officers observed all this and smiled to themselves. It was an old story to them.

Deftly the captain laid the steamer alongside the wharf and the hawsers were no sooner made fast than the youngsters were streaming over the side, canvas bags on their shoulders, eager to feel their own land under their feet and to report at Camp Stuart for the final muster. Judson Wyman waited for Briscoe to clean up and change his clothes after coming off watch. While he lingered on the steamer's bridge for a farewell chat with the chief officer, somebody shouted his name from the wharf. The voice was familiar, but for the life of him Judson could not remember where he had heard it until he ran to the end of the bridge to gaze down. And then he could not believe his eyes.

There stood a slender, scholarly looking young man who wore glasses and a very precise manner. The amazing thing about it was that he was trimly dressed in a blue uniform with gilt buttons and wore a blue cap to match it. He was an officer of the Shipping Board fleet of the American merchant marine, and a seagoing officer at that. The evidence was unmistakable. And the young man was just as certainly Spencer Torrance, instructor in the department of English of Follansbee College, North Dakota. Judson stared at him in comic bewilderment. It was this same Spencer Torrance who had helped to thrill him with the ambition to follow the sea, whose hobby was the history of Yankee ships and sailors. But his knowledge had been gleaned in books and libraries, and Judson could not possibly imagine him as anywhere else than in a college

classroom trying to teach a stupid, restless lot of freshmen something about English literature. To discover him on a wharf at Newport News in the rôle of a ship's officer was entirely too much like seeing a spook. Spencer Torrance must have guessed that Judson was struggling with strange emotions, for he sang out:

"Of course you don't understand it. I can see that. Supposing I come aboard and explain myself. I have been waiting for your ship, just to catch a glimpse of you."

"How are you, Mr. Torrance! Please come aboard," replied Judson, with marked politeness, as though he were addressing a member of the faculty. The smart blue uniform still fascinated him, but there were no gold sleeve stripes to help identify the rank of this unexpected ship's officer. Spencer Torrance climbed a tall ladder and rather gingerly let himself down on deck. After they had shaken hands he pulled a packet from his pocket and explained:

"Letters for you, from home — a bundle of them. I found them at Camp Stuart. I left Follansbee only three weeks ago. Yes, your folks were all well. Your mother misses you, but never mind about that. Her letters will tell you. Your father is doing well in the real estate business, remarkably well, since your wonderful great-grandfather went into partnership with him. How is the old gentleman? As spry as ever and the pattern of a benevolent dictator. There is only one Captain William Lan-

caster. So much for that. No need to ask about you, Judson. You look like a bear."

"But what about you?" Judson almost implored. "You told me you were n't rugged enough to think of going to sea, so you would have to stick on the campus and dream about it, and yarn with Captain William Lancaster about the great old days. And I think you said something about finances tying you up. I certainly am flabbergasted."

"That is partly because you can't feel quite sure that a college professor is a real human being, Judson. Do you mind dropping the *Mister* and calling me plain Torrance? That may help some. Not to keep you in this painful suspense, I am a supercargo. It is an old-fashioned job revived and brought up to date by the Shipping Board."

"I know what they used to be," returned Judson, "but that was a hundred years ago or so — officers who looked after the cargo for the owners, and did the trading in foreign ports."

"Precisely. This is a modern experiment, to give educated young men a training in foreign commerce, a chance to observe and learn how business is done, to teach them how to manage ships economically. Shipmasters are no longer merchants and traders and financiers. And all our new American steamship lines will need trained organizations abroad. It is a new game to our people."

"A bright idea," was Judson's cordial verdict. "This shipping problem is n't all a matter of training seamen and officers. What did you have to do

to start as a supercargo? Just jump into a uniform?"

"Hardly that," said Torrance, the least bit nettled. "I am more or less of a maritime expert to begin with, and I speak French and Spanish. And there is a training school for supercargoes in Washington — very intensive you might call it, for it is only a week's course. I am a graduate, if you please, with my poor head stuffed full of lectures on foreign exchange, salvage, marine insurance, the American export trade, port regulations, ship's registry, classification, and other documents, maritime law, cargo stowage, and a few other things."

Judson eyed the supercargo with profound respect. Any man who could carry all that dunnage under his hat must have more brains than Daniel Webster, he said to himself. Without doubt this particular kind of a job fitted Spencer Torrance as nicely as his new uniform. In fact, he had been getting ready for just such a berth.

"You *are* a fast worker, Torrance," grinned the ordinary seaman. "How did you connect with the big idea, and when?"

"I read an advertisement a few days after you left home. It outlined the duties and urged young college graduates to apply. The salary is ample to meet all my requirements. I resigned from the faculty at Follansbee and made a bee-line for Washington. Your high-stepping great-grandfather threatened to break his cane on me if I hesitated one moment about taking this chance to go to sea."

"You did n't have to be urged. You flew to it. I can see that," said Judson. "And where do you go from here?"

"I am already assigned to a ship, the brand-new, eight-thousand-ton steel steamer *Liberty Chimes*. She has just finished fitting out at Hog Island and is now taking in cargo at Baltimore for Rotterdam. I found out that your ship was due and I ran down here for a couple of days. I wish you were going to sail with me."

"Maybe I will, at that," promptly answered Judson. "It sounds mighty good to me. We shall have to consult my side-partner, Briscoe, James E. You and he ought to get on together because you are so darned different."

Presently Briscoe came out of his room, ready to go ashore, a young man hard and lean and wary, viewing life as a battle and always hoping for the best, but expecting the worst. Spencer Torrance studied him with uncommon interest as a strange chum for Judson Wyman to have picked up, while, for his part, Briscoe wondered who the high-brow in uniform could possibly be. Judson saved detailed explanation until later, not at all certain that these two friends of his could ever understand each other. He suggested that they had better get under way for Camp Stuart, and Spencer Torrance ran on ahead to find a taxi. Taking advantage of his absence, Briscoe remarked, rather doubtfully:

"A supercargo? And what kind of a bird is that? Never mind. I'll take your word for it that he is a

regular guy, Jud. He got tired of trying to shove the book stuff into ivory domes like yours, and thought he'd rather risk getting drowned for a change. I don't blame him. Supposing we take a look at that ship of his. She is an oil-burner, for one thing, and that makes a hit with me. Those Hog Island steamers are fine vessels, none better, even if they do launch another one every few minutes. And you'd naturally like to go shipmates with this highly educated supercargo that comes from your own home town."

"If you think the ship is all right, after you see her, Kid, I should like to make the voyage with Torrance. And this *Liberty Chimes* is bound across the Western Ocean."

"Let's go, Jud. I want to watch a supercargo and see his wheels go round. I hope he is n't going to be a Jonah."

At Camp Stuart the kindly supervisor, Captain Waterman, welcomed them back from the sea as though all these boys belonged to him. There was a certain amount of red tape before they were released from the sea training service, but it unwound itself swiftly. Captain Waterman called Judson into his office to say:

"The master of the *Roanoke* gives me an excellent report of you, Wyman. Would you like to go with him again, with an ordinary seaman's rating? I think he would like to make you an acting quartermaster. He seems much impressed with your wholesome influence among the boys."

"Thank you, sir, and Captain Nickerson," replied Judson, "but I have made other plans. I am looking for experience, all kinds of it."

"I understand," mused Captain Waterman, "for I ran away to sea at fourteen and had to live with hard ships and hard men. That is the spirit of youth. One thing more. A pocketbook was sent to me from police headquarters in Norfolk after you sailed. It had been picked up empty in one of the amusement parks outside the city. There was a card in it, with the address of the Camp Stuart station, and one or two papers bearing your name. Presumably your pocket was picked on your way through Norfolk. Why did n't you report the loss to me?"

"Because it was strictly confidential," laughed Judson. "I accused the wrong man and it cost me a black eye and a night in the brig."

"Ah, I remember," chuckled the elderly master mariner. "Well, this proves his innocence. Briscoe, was it? I marked him as a tough customer."

"White clear through, sir," exclaimed Judson. "He does n't have to prove anything to me. We are not going to part company as shipmates."

"The sea tests them out, the weak and the strong, the faithless and the loyal," spoke Captain Waterman, with the deep wisdom of his sixty years. "You are probably right about Briscoe and I was wrong, for you have sailed a voyage with him."

In Newport News next day Judson happened to spy Charlie Trask coming out of a clothing shop.

"Ahoy there, Sudsy; come here and give an account of yourself," commanded Judson, overtaking the youngster and firmly grasping him by the back of the neck. With the fluttered air of one caught in the act, Charlie Trask wriggled loose and explained:

"I intended to see you to say good-bye, Wyman, and to thank you for all your kindness to me. I found a ship this morning and she sails for Rio to-morrow."

"Why the deuce did n't you wait and go with me?" scolded Judson. "Now you don't know what you have got yourself into."

"That was just it," meekly answered Charlie. "I was afraid that you might feel you had to take care of me, if we were in the same ship, and I did n't want to be a burden on your mind. So I thought it best to go it on my own hook."

"You can't take care of yourself, you and your bucket of suds!" angrily shouted Judson. "Confound you, I was anxious to sail with you so that you could protect *me*. Don't mind my fooling, Charlie. On the level, I am awfully disappointed. And Briscoe will feel the same way."

"It makes me feel sad to leave you fellows, Wyman, but I am sure we will meet again, perhaps in a foreign port. I must work out my own salvation."

## CHAPTER X

### TROUBLE IN THE NORTH SEA

FRESH from the "wet basin" of the great Hog Island shipyard on the Delaware River where she had been made ready for her maiden voyage, the steamer *Liberty Chimes* was filling her holds with cargo in the busy port of Baltimore. Like so many powerful arms the derricks plucked crated automobiles, bags and bales and boxes of merchandise, and all kinds of machinery from the wharf, and slung them into the cavernous hatches with a roar and a rattle. To see all this stuff pour into her reminded one of trying to fill a bottomless pit. It was no such simple task as packing these thousands of tons into a warehouse. They had to be stowed and braced and wedged to withstand the violent motion of a ship in heavy weather, and so distributed that she should ride on an even keel. The boss stevedore was the man in authority. In port his word was law.

He was a bulky man whose voice was strong and his manners sometimes hasty. At his heels followed Spencer Torrance, the supercargo, busy with paper and pencil, climbing up and down narrow iron ladders, or scrambling to the wharf and back again. He proposed to learn all he could about this new game. The boss stevedore liked his energy and earnestness because he was no loafer himself, and

when they knocked off for dinner he said good-humoredly:

"There may be something in this supercargo notion after all, though I did set it down as another silly stunt of one of them theorists in the Shipping Board. The average skipper don't know what goes into his ship or how it comes out. Now in case of collision or other damage, maybe with insurance or salvage claims, you'd be there with your stowage plans and diagrams, Mr. Torrance, to protect the owner and the shipper. I'm not one of them old dogs that shy at new tricks. I'll try anything once."

"You have been very patient with me, Mr. O'Malley, but how do you think it will work at sea?" anxiously inquired the supercargo. "It is my duty to report on the efficiency of the ship, to find out where money is wasted in operation, just as if she were a business concern ashore."

"Most skippers will resent it, Mr. Torrance, and the stupid ones will give you the most trouble. You will try to make it clear at the start that you are no spy or meddler, but a business agent for the vessel. A lot of these old webfooted masters have not waked up to the fact that things are all different now. After they dock their ship, they are done with her until she is ready to sail again. They expect the agent to attend to all the business in port, but what of the dozens of new American steamer lines to all the world that have no agents of their own? It costs four or five thousand dollars a day to delay a ship in port, with costs as high

as they are. And if a supercargo can learn the ropes and hustle for fuel and supplies and berthing space, and get his ship to sea to save time on the turn-around, will he pay for himself? Yes, he will, and many times over in a single voyage."

"It is attracting a good many young fellows who are ambitious to learn the business end of shipping," said Torrance. "The average college graduate is not keen to go to sea as a common sailor. He lacks the salt-water tradition, for one thing, and a seafaring career does not appeal to him."

"Right you are, for work that is rough and dirty to begin with goes against the grain of the elegant young gentleman with a diploma in his fist. I do not mean it unkindly, Mr. Torrance. I wish I had more education myself. Good luck to you, and a bit of advice. Tact and a stiff upper lip will carry you a long way. And as long as you are willing to learn, there is no cause to be ashamed of ignorance."

Meanwhile Judson Wyman had discovered that the *Liberty Chimes* was short of men. There was no difficulty about his joining the crew as an ordinary seaman. So great was the demand for sailors that a dozen other steamers were waiting short-handed. "Kid" Briscoe had scraped acquaintance with an assistant engineer of the *Liberty Chimes* and convinced him that here was the chance to hire the finest young water-tender on the Atlantic Ocean, sober, experienced, and absolutely reliable. This much accomplished, Judson and Briscoe invited Spencer Torrance to dine ashore with them and

go to a theater. It was a farewell spree, paid for out of the wages of the training cruise.

They took their bags aboard the ship next day and stowed them in clean, airy deck-houses with shower baths attached. The steamer was more than twice the tonnage of the wooden *Roanoke* and she seemed majestic to Judson. He went below with Briscoe to explore the engine-room and was fairly amazed. The compartment seemed almost empty. He had never seen turbine engines. There was no towering complication of cylinders, pistons, and crank-shafts, but merely two squat and massive coverings of gray metal which housed the turbines and reduction gears like the genie that was imprisoned in the bottle. The chief engineer was testing them for an hour's run at the wharf. There was no hiss and clatter, no vibration, only a droning hum as the bright steel shaft revolved in the long tunnel and whirled the ponderous propeller. Briscoe led the way through an alley, and they stood in a boiler room where the oil-burners roared in the furnaces as the air pressure sprayed the fuel. The one fireman on duty was in white working clothes and there was not a smudge on them. It was all immaculately clean, and such a contrast to the sooty inferno of a coal-burning steamer that "Kid" Briscoe exclaimed:

"Am I in luck? Your friend Torrance was spilling some wonderful language last night about the romance of the sea, Jud. This is it. This is poetry to me, understand? And when I stand here on duty,

watching the gauges of the boilers and pumps and the main feed, I can find just as much to rave about as Torrance ever saw in a yarn of some walloping old wind-jammer of a clipper around Cape Horn. Turbines and crude oil fuel are just plain wonderful to me, boy. I may be a poor dub at English literature, but you can't tell me that romance, as you call it, has taken the count when men can build such things as these to shove around the seas in."

"Kipling said it for you," replied Judson, who had been reading "McAndrew's Hymn," "but I don't know that he saw it a bit more clearly than you do."

Alas, the romance of the sea was considerably jarred for Judson when he went on deck and met his fellow sailors, several of whom had just arrived from the office of the Seamen's Union in Baltimore. They were cursing and grumbling among themselves as they chucked their stuff in the bunks and shifted into overalls and dungarees. At a guess Judson catalogued them as four Scandinavians, two Italians, a negro, a Spaniard, an Englishman, and two Americans. It was a Yankee ship, as the Stars and Stripes proudly proclaimed, but where were the Yankee sailors? Judson edged in among them to get acquainted, but met with a rude reception. A Norwegian asked him a question or two and spat tobacco juice on the clean floor as he sneered:

"Training ship sailors is no goot. You draw a man's pay an' us real sailor fellers do your work.

Makin' a seaman in t'ree months, one year, is nonsense."

"Perhaps it is, for a square-head who is too thick to learn it any quicker," snapped Judson, who was usually slow to anger.

"A bally good answer," put in the Englishman, with a friendly grin. "If these Dutchmen get nasty, bang their blighted beans together. You can jolly well do it."

The surly Norwegian took a careful look at Judson's solid shoulders and noted that he was almost as tall as the room. For this reason the argument went no farther. The quarters were so comfortable, so different from other ships in which these men must have sailed, that Judson expected to hear them express their pleasure, but most of them were in a complaining mood. These fabricated ships were no good. Who ever heard of a yard launching a seagoing steamer every three or four days? The grub would probably be rotten. A winter passage was a dog's life. The ship looked as though she would drown herself in a heavy sea. She was loading too deep. The old man was a hard case, so they had heard ashore. He would learn a thing or two if he tried to haze them. A sailor had his rights nowadays and he knew how to stand up for them.

Having cooled down, this chronic growling began to amuse Judson to whom it seemed like wasting breath and borrowing trouble. Conditions had changed, but the spirit of the old-fashioned forecastle was hard to kill. He found himself chatting

with one of the Americans of the crew, a big-boned, shambling man with a bald head and a mustache sprinkled with gray. He looked as though he might have followed the plough instead of the sea.

"Pillsoe is my name, able seaman, hailin' from Bangor," he drawled. "And you come from North Dakoty? I want to know. That's where you find farmin' on a grand scale. I quit the sea for a spell to run my own place — she cuts thirty ton o' hay and pastures ten head o' cattle. High wages coaxed me aboard ship for the winter. All the Pillsoes are dum fools that way. They sort of warp an' dry up if they stay ashore too long."

"How do you like the ship, Mr. Pillsoe?" asked Judson who found this shipmate very congenial.

"An elegant vessel, sonny. She's well found and clever. And takin' 'em as they run, it's a good crew. I've sailed with heaps worse. You must n't mind their cackle. These foreigners is queer critturs. You have to get used to 'em."

The boatswain bawled something outside the door and the men scrambled out to be mustered and assigned to watches. The last odds and ends of cargo were being hoisted in and the steamer was almost ready to sail. When the names were called off, Judson was informed that he was in the first mate's watch, and he felt a little disturbed, for his first impression of this officer was unfavorable. Judson had naturally expected to find American officers even if the crew was mostly foreign, but this Mr. Cantwell was a Britisher, from cap to boots, and

evidently proud of it. He was clean-cut, competent, and good-looking, but a supercilious manner seemed to convey the impression that American ships could teach him nothing about his trade. He spoke curtly, cocksure of his opinions, although without brag or bluster. Never shouting abuse at a sailor, he preferred to insult him with a few quietly spoken words that stung like a whiplash.

The *Liberty Chimes* sailed out of Baltimore at daylight of the following morning. Judson Wyman had already discovered that he was capable of doing most of the work expected of an ordinary seaman. He knew how to paint and scrub, how to splice a rope or cast the lead, and he could stand his trick at the wheel. The rest of it was to be learned day by day, and there was plenty of time ahead, for the law compelled him to serve a year before any advancement was possible.

His foreign shipmates would be at no pains to make the life easier for him, he could see that. He was of a different race and kind, eager for opportunity instead of eternally yapping about his "rights" which seemed to mean doing as little as possible in return for high wages. He was fond of old Pillsoe from Bangor and got along pleasantly with the other American of the forecastle, a youth named Jenkins, who was a rather weak specimen, amounting to nothing in particular, but with a decent upbringing and ideas.

There would be no forlorn feeling of loneliness so long as Briscoe and Spencer Torrance were on

board. Here were three musketeers of blue water, drawn together by chance, who were blithely resolved to stand by each other through thick and thin, blow high, blow low. The steamer was slipping along toward the sea when Briscoe sauntered on deck and poked his head into the room where Judson lived with several of the assorted aliens. Offering the sleepy young man a cup of piping hot coffee, he hauled him out of his bunk and cheerily exclaimed:

"What ho — eight bells and time to rouse out. What have you got in here, a League of Nations? Or is it a melting pot? And how are their table manners?"

"Sloppy!" said Judson, yawning. "They are used to eating hash from tin plates held between their knees, but you ought to hear them cuss the cook if the steak is cold or the eggs are boiled too soft. How are things with you, James E.?"

"One grand, sweet song, boy. A bully crowd below, all of 'em from God's own country. And you need n't call us a 'black gang' any more. You can't put stupid wops in an oil-burning fire-room, and turbines are another fancy job. Oh, we're there with kid gloves on. Have you seen the super-educated supercargo? The skipper won't toss him overboard until we are off soundings. He wants to make sure of drowning him."

"He was low in his mind last night," replied Judson. "The captain and the chief officer must have made themselves pretty disagreeable. I am afraid Torrance will have an unhappy voyage."

"It may be all of that, Jud, but the one best bet is that he does n't weaken. I like that lad, although I can't make out what he is talking about half the time. If they treat him wrong, tell him I'll do my best to get the skipper in a dark alley in Rotterdam."

The *Liberty Chimes* passed clear of Chesapeake Bay after nightfall of this first day and swung into the long track across the Western Ocean. The sea rolled sullen under a somber sky, with a strong easterly wind. The landsman would have called it very rough weather. The deep-laden steamer nosed into it in a dogged fashion of her own while the flying spray drenched her and now and then a heavy wave slapped her deck. It was the ocean's challenge to a ship that had not yet found herself, that was yet to prove her fitness to struggle and to endure. There was this in her favor, however, that threescore other ships, built precisely like her in that miracle of a Hog Island yard, had sailed on every sea and all around the watery globe without mishap or breakdown. Too late to serve their purpose in bridging the road to the battle-fields of France, it was their splendid destiny to help win a peaceful conquest for their nation on the trade routes of the world.

There were forty-odd men on board of the *Liberty Chimes;* not a large company, but they were divided into many separate groups which lived and worked apart according to the custom and the caste of the sea. Spencer Torrance was an officer, and therefore Judson Wyman, ordinary seaman, would not have dreamed of going near his quarters or of speaking to

him unless spoken to. They did not happen to meet until the second day at sea when the weather brightened and the supercargo emerged from his cabin to stroll aft. Finding Judson off duty, he explained that seasickness had not kept him under cover, but a frightful lot of routine paper work. A Government bureau was never happy unless it could fairly bury its people under documents that had to be filled in and checked up and endorsed, and what not.

"Oh, much worse than marking a pile of freshman examination papers, Judson," said the supercargo, whose spirit was undismayed.

"If all the freshman papers were as bad as mine, it must have been some chore," sadly replied Judson. "Aside from being chained to the desk, how are you getting on? Briscoe has been worried about you."

"As a chance to study human nature, this beats a classroom," Torrance lightly responded. "The skipper, Captain Joshua Strickland, is a peevish man who takes a sad view of life. I infer that he is unhappily married, for one thing. Hen-pecked husbands are apt to wear that dejected air. He had an army supply ship during the War and was torpedoed off the coast of Brittany. It was a bad affair, a dozen of his men killed or drowned, and the ship blown to pieces under him. It shook his nerves, I think. Little things upset him. It bothers him to have me underfoot, and he fusses about it in a rasping way, but I hope to smooth him out after he sees that I can be really useful to him. The British chief officer,

Cantwell? Far more ability and courage than the old man, but perfectly impossible. He is rude to everybody in his bland, easy way. I shall have to put up with it, I suppose."

"What is he doing in an American ship?" blurted Judson. "You can't tell me that he ever thought of taking out naturalization papers."

"Mr. Cantwell holds what they call a 'red ink' ticket in our merchant service," explained Torrance. "As soon as we began to build so many ships there were not enough American masters and mates to man them. The Government, therefore, granted provisional licenses to foreign officers for a certain length of time. It was an emergency law, to tide us over. There are ships under our flag to-day without an American officer or seaman aboard."

"That explains the sea training service and the recruiting game that pulled me all the way from North Dakota," said Judson. "Unless we can find American crews for American ships, this grand new merchant marine will be a good deal of a false alarm, it seems to me."

"You ought to know," laughed Torrance, "for you live with the average forecastle crowd of a Yankee ship. Before the War only five per cent of the sailors in our ships were native-born or naturalized citizens. It is much better now — almost fifty per cent American, taking it by and large. You may have better luck in your next ship."

"I don't mind it very much," Judson declared. "I never expected it would be like a college campus.

A fellow learns a lot by rubbing against all kinds of folks, and if he thinks he is better than they are he is apt to fool himself."

It was the fact that Judson had looked forward to a certain amount of brutality and hardship, a taste of the old school of "fists, feet, and belaying pins." His ideas were colored by the tales of the bucko mate and the packet rat of the Western Ocean in the stormy days gone by. He discovered that no officer dared to work the soul out of a sailor or to feed him on putrid salt pork and wormy hardtack. Seamen lived fully as well as skilled mechanics ashore and their hours of labor were as fixed and regular, eight hours a day, and extra pay for overtime. This was as it should be, for men who could appreciate such treatment and were willing to give an honest and loyal return.

The *Liberty Chimes* steamed into the middle of the Atlantic and "the roaring forties" hammered and twisted her in one winter gale after another, but she was staunch to the last rivet and angle-iron and the turbines hummed their quiet, unfaltering song. This appeared to disappoint Mr. Cantwell, the competent and superior British chief officer, whose taunting remarks had so annoyed Spencer Torrance that they clashed one day at the dinner table, and the sparks flew.

"The idea of the United States setting up as a rival to Great Britain on the sea is all tommy-rot, you know," pleasantly observed Mr. Cantwell. "You are a nation of shopkeepers, farmers, artisans,

and so on. Your people can never learn to think in terms of the sea. Take these hundreds of ships that you slapped together for the War. They will run themselves to death in a little while and your merchant marine will be so much junk. You can't build ships that way. It is n't done in England."

"It could have been done nowhere else than in the United States," hotly retorted Torrance. "Eighty different plants and shops made the parts for this ship, for instance, and when they were assembled at Hog Island they fitted together without a flaw or a mistake. Some poor ships were built elsewhere, but most of them are first-class. Did you turn out no poor ships in England during the rush of War?"

"Well, hardly," smiled Mr. Cantwell. "We don't do things that way. We have been at it too long."

The melancholy Captain Joshua Strickland looked up from his plate of soup to say, in a tired voice:

"That big vessel I was torpedoed in was a chartered British tramp, only six months old, and if ever there was a botched job, she was it. She would n't steam and she would n't steer, and when she was hit she flew to bits like a gingerbread ship."

"What do you find wrong with this steamer, Mr. Cantwell?" demanded Torrance whose near-sighted eyes flashed behind his glasses.

"Wait until she strikes real weather, my dear man. I have heard all about it from friends of mine in the States. These ships were built by barbers and baseball players and clergymen and persons like

that. It was a madhouse. My word, but they actually made rivets of putty and painted 'em red to fool the inspectors."

"Then why do you risk your life in such a floating coffin?" cried Torrance. "You will stay in American ships and crowd better men out just as long as you can get higher wages and better treatment than you find at home. And you won't turn a finger to become an American citizen until the law compels you to."

"You go too far, Mr. Torrance," rapped out the chief officer. "Really, I can't stand impertinence from such a useless bit of lumber as a callow supercargo."

Captain Joshua Strickland was letting his mournful gaze rest upon the roast beef and potatoes, but the argument made him nervous, and he interrupted:

"Not another word, gentlemen. You are scolding each other like two old women in a fish market. It bothers me to listen to it. Don't let me hear you abuse this vessel, Mr. Cantwell. And you will please not to go around with a chip on your shoulder, Mr. Torrance. You upset me enough, as it is."

When the *Liberty Chimes* began to grope her way up the English Channel through fog and drizzle, the captain and his chief officer spent most of their time on the bridge or in the wheel-house. The shrouded waters were crowded with traffic and perilous with unseen sands and rocky forelands. Without mishap the steamer crept through the Strait of Dover and into the North Sea. Then the

thick weather cleared, and it looked like a short and pleasant run to Rotterdam and the end of the voyage.

Captain Strickland still appeared anxious, however, which was odd in this bright afternoon with the ship's exact position known. He wandered to and fro on the bridge, picking up his binoculars to scan the sea, and having little to say. The officers were accustomed to his moody fits and the rest of the crew, of course, paid no attention. Those off watch were loafing on the sunny side of the deck or drying out their wet clothes and boots. Judson Wyman was scrubbing one of his flannel shirts with a bar of soap when the ship lurched under his feet and sent him sprawling headlong. As he fell, he heard a gigantic roar and a rumble, and the deck waved up and down as though made of paper. The whole structure of the vessel was trembling. But for the infernal uproar, it was like ramming a rock at full speed.

Judson sat on the deck and stared forward. Incredible things were happening. He saw bales and boxes and machines flying up into the air from the cargo holds. A nice, shiny automobile shot higher than the bridge and splashed into the sea. He saw the skipper throw up his hands and dodge a case of canned tomatoes which hit a stanchion and exploded like a bomb. This made the bridge look like a scene of frightful carnage. Judson thought that Captain Joshua Strickland was covered with his own blood, whereas he was merely wiping tomato juice from

his face and trying to collect his wits. A fountain of crude oil gushed out of the ship like a geyser and fell on deck in black spray. Débris of various sorts continued to patter out of the sky.

Something had happened to the *Liberty Chimes*, concluded Judson, making no attempt to move. This opinion was accurate, as far as it went. He was too amazed to guess at what had happened, and it certainly was interesting to watch this rain of new shoes and sulky ploughs and sewing machines and flour barrels. He found himself saying, with a silly grin:

"There *is* a mess for the bright young supercargo. Now, what will he do about *that?*"

The engines had been stopped and the ship lost headway, while the noise of escaping steam was deafening. Already the bow was settling lower in the water. The men on deck were still stupefied, waiting for orders, but several of them began to run toward the lifeboats. It was the second mate, a chunky, quick-tempered Irishman from Hoboken, who jumped among them to sing out:

"None o' that, boys! I'll stretch the first son-of-a-gun of ye that lays hands on a boat. For'ard now, on the run, and stand by. She hit a floatin' mine that was left over from the bloody war. The beach is only twenty miles away, and we can put her there before she fills, so behave yourselves."

They followed reluctantly, still eyeing the boats, and Judson pulled himself together to shove ahead of them. This was no time to play the laggard. As

he ran forward, he saw a quartermaster and a mess-boy lugging the chief officer between them. He had been blown clear of the bridge to the deck below. His head was gashed and a broken arm dangled in a limp sleeve. Just beyond the bridge, a huge blackened gap extended between the splintered hatches and almost across the ship. What appalled Judson was to see the two parts of the ship, fore and aft of this destruction, working up and down with the rolling motion of the sea as though they were hinged. The staunch steamer had been literally blown in two and was held together merely by the plates of her outer skin as the pieces of a broken tree are held together by the bark.

Every time she dipped or rolled there were horrible grating, grinding sounds of shattered frames and beams and pipes. The forward bulkheads had been smashed and that whole end of her was filled with water. It pulled her down so that the stern rose high in air, but the tenacious grip of the rivets withstood the strain and the plates refused to be wrenched asunder. A strange thing it was to watch the struggle of a ship with a broken back.

The engineer's gang had quite naturally bolted for the deck after putting out the fires in order to prevent a boiler explosion. It was their unanimous belief that the ship had been blown to glory, and it was time to leave her, bullies, leave her. Finding that part of her showed indications of staying afloat a little while longer, they were perfectly willing to

return below and try to hold steam enough to put her on the beach. "Kid" Briscoe looked about for Judson and hailed him with a cheerful shout.

"It's a rough life on the Western Ocean, eh, buddy? I'll bet that was one of the forty thousand mines laid by the little old American Navy. That mine was there with the punch, all right. When they picked 'em all up again, they missed one. This was it."

## CHAPTER XI

### THEY RISK A RASH ADVENTURE

THE *Liberty Chimes* was moving ever so slowly in the direction of the nearest of those low islands which skirt the coast of Holland. To all appearances she was a dying ship that courageously struggled for survival in spite of a mortal wound. The two ends of her had not broken apart, but they buckled and see-sawed more alarmingly with every hour of her snail-like progress. Old Pillsoe, that able seaman from Bangor, who showed no excitement, drawled that she reminded him of a man with one suspender button. When that popped off, he was liable to lose his breeches. Nobody else could find a joke in the situation. The radio wires had been carried away by whizzing fragments of cargo, one of which had crashed through the deck over the operator's room and caused other damage. He was working furiously to make repairs, but no S.O.S. calls had been sent out. And the North Sea was empty of shipping clear to the horizon's rim.

The compartments aft of the explosion were still clear of water which was held back by the bulkhead or transverse steel wall close to the shattered section of hull. Captain Joshua Strickland expected to hear this collapse at any moment. In such a grave emergency he was not a man to dominate his crew,

to compel obedience, and inspire them with his own inflexible resolution. Veteran seaman though he was, he failed as a master of men in a crisis. It was instinctive to stay with his ship as long as she floated, but he lost heart sooner than might have been expected of him. The dusk of the winter afternoon closed around the forlorn ship and then the darkness curtained her. The wind came up to hold her back and the rising seas rushed through the holes in her sides and pounded against the straining bulkhead that kept her from going to the bottom.

The stern was cocked so high out of water that this wreck of a steamer was almost impossible to steer, and her propeller thrashed in such futile effort that she crawled forward no more than a couple of miles in an hour. The men had swung the boats out and were roosting in them. They were ready to let go and pull away, and there was no driving them back to duty. There was no mad rush or riot about it. The skipper could do as he liked. They were waiting to see whether he could put her on the beach. If the weather got much rougher, they would quit her sooner, before the boats were smashed in lowering.

While Captain Strickland wavered in his mind, the chief officer limped out of his room, his head bandaged, his broken arm in splints. Mr. Cantwell's manners might be unpleasant, but he was the stronger man of the two. The skipper was nervously explaining what he proposed to do, when there was a tremendous crash of breaking metal that made their hearts stand still. It subsided quickly and the

ship was strangely quiet. The grinding clamor of the twisting plates and rivets had wholly ceased. The captain and the mate peered into the darkness a little way forward of where they were standing and saw a great shadowy bulk separate itself from the rest of the ship and go drifting off to leeward. This was the bow and the forward cargo holds, more than one third of the *Liberty Chimes*.

"My word, how extraordinary," softly exclaimed the undaunted Mr. Cantwell. "The blooming ship is in two pieces. There goes one of them. We will shove off in the boats at once, I take it, sir."

"This section of her may float awhile longer. Perhaps it won't sink at all," affirmed the captain. Instead of laying down the law, he was listening to advice, willing to divide the responsibility. There was something to be said in his favor. The shocking memory of that other explosion in the war zone, when a German torpedo had shattered his ship and butchered his crew, was fresh in his mind. This second calamity left him unstrung. The *Liberty Chimes* was a new steamer, almost untried, put together in a hurry, and she had not yet won her master's confidence. His chief officer, faint and sick from his injuries, was as cocksure of himself as ever, and with the same old confidence in his judgments he exclaimed:

"I know what these ships are like, Captain Strickland. That bulkhead will go like a slice of cheese when she pulls some more of her rivets out. And, pop, she'll plunge to Davy Jones and drown

the whole boiling of us like rats. The men are in the boats, you say. Ten to one they will be gone if you don't watch out and we'll have to swim for it."

This was close to the truth. When the crew heard the terrifying racket as the bow broke adrift, they lingered no longer. The officers could not hold them back. It was every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. The electric lights had gone out on deck and a lantern glowed feebly here and there. The engineer's force had received the summons to abandon ship. A word through the speaking-tube was enough. They required no urging. Duty might be their gospel, but when the skipper was ready to leave the ship, the code of the sea told them to go with him.

Judson Wyman hung back, refusing to seek a place in a boat until he was certain that his two comrades were safe and sound, and taken care of. He had no intention of being separated from them. Luckily Spencer Torrance blundered into him and together they hunted for Briscoe and shouted his name. He found them in the gloom, but instead of urging them toward a boat his behavior was most peculiar. Roughly telling them to shut up and keep still, he dragged Judson by the arm and hoarsely whispered to Torrance to follow. Into a darkened room of the nearest deck-house he shoved them and closed and locked the door. The first thought was that he had gone crazy, and Torrance began to sputter, but Judson waited because he had learned

that there was usually some method in Briscoe's madness.

"If you want to commit suicide, why include us?" Torrance was saying when Briscoe broke in:

"Calm and collected! That's me! And never more interested in living to a good old age. They won't bother to look for us. Lots of time for a sociable little party. This hooker has no more idea of sinking than I have of being a college professor. Get that?"

"But all hands are leaving her," protested Judson, very much befogged. "I heard the captain give the orders. What sort of a bad joke are you springing on us, James E.? Every blamed boat will be gone in a few minutes."

"The sooner the better," was the mysterious reply. "All I'm afraid of is that they may change their minds. It's this rough weather that scared them out of her, and blowing harder all the time. And they don't like the idea of going ashore in the breakers if she holds together that long. Don't you mind what the old man said. The strain cracked him. You listen to me."

"I am listening with the most serious attention," was the surprising statement of Spencer Torrance who had stopped sputtering.

"I thought you'd catch hold of the big idea," delightedly returned Briscoe. "So much for brains and education."

"It is a prodigious gamble, the wildest sporting proposition I ever heard of," said Torrance, "but

if we win — well, Briscoe, I am with you to the finish, win or lose."

Judson's voice was fairly pathetic as he implored: "Just because I am thick and slow, do I have to be left out of this fool conspiracy?"

"This is still a valuable ship," explained Torrance, "even if she is floating around the high seas on the installment plan. Our piece of her contains half a million dollars' worth of cargo, for one thing. I know all about that."

"And a new front end can be built on her," added Briscoe. "We've got the engines and the main works, boy — something like a million dollars' worth of ship."

"The laws of salvage and of marine insurance provide that a ship is not a derelict so long as any of her crew remain on board," came from the studious supercargo, who was now earning his salary beyond any doubt. "A derelict can be picked up and taken in tow by any other vessel that happens to come along, and as much as half the value of the ship and cargo claimed as a reward. In this case we are only liable for towage, and that means saving a tremendous amount of money for the owners."

"Hear him use language," said the admiring Briscoe. "All I figured out was a tidy bunch of money in our pockets if we turned the trick. Somebody will have to loosen up to pay for the damage to my nervous system. Understand, do you, Jud? Does she percolate?"

"The grandest scheme ever, Kid. The seaman-

ship of it appeals to me more than the money. Of course we are pretty sure to be drowned before morning, but let 's go to it."

It was wildly ridiculous, this serious, leisurely conference in a dark room of a shattered steamer which had been abandoned by her crew as doomed to plunge under before daylight. But the wonderful spirit of youth sometimes succeeds because it does n't know any better. Older and wiser heads have called many a brilliant deed ridiculous and impossible before youth sallied rashly forth and accomplished it. In France the poppies bloom above the graves of lads who did the things that could n't be done and thereby won the victory.

Briscoe opened the door of the room and quietly stepped on deck. The ship was deserted. From the sea near by he heard commands shouted and the thump of oars against wooden tholepins. He cautiously advanced to the rail and saw the boat-lanterns glimmer between the crests of the waves. The little flotilla of castaways was steering toward the coast of Holland in hopes of finding a harbor. Likely enough they had not discovered that three men were missing. There had been no roll-call in the last confused moments of getting away. So far, so good, thought Briscoe, with a sigh of relief. The stage was set for the great adventure.

He called to his two comrades and they went below to the silent engine-room which seemed a ghostly place. In one corner a dynamo still purred and the throb of a pump was like the heart-beat of

the ship. A few electric lights were burning and Briscoe switched on more of them. The explosion had broken the connections in other parts of the ship, but here they were still intact. The turbines were idle and from somewhere above came the muffled roar of escaping steam. Briscoe ran into the fire-room and the others followed, feeling ignorant and helpless. He glanced at the dials of the various gauges, twisted a valve wheel here and another one there and paused to say with a jubilant grin:

"There's no reason why we can't put a little steam to her. I'll have to make a fireman out of you, Mr. Torrance. There's oil in the after fuel tanks even if the supply in the double bottom for'ard was blown out of her. I'll show you how to tend the burners under two boilers. It's up to me to stand watch as engineer, oiler, and water-tender."

Here Judson took a hand in the discussion as the navigating officer and deck force.

"You can't go ahead, old man. The pressure of the sea will cave that bulkhead in. That is the bow of the ship now."

"So it is," sheepishly replied Briscoe. "I overlooked that bet. Handling a piece of a ship is new to me. What about imitatin' the well-known crab and going ahead backward?"

"Exactly what I thought of," cried Judson, glad to show them that he was not a stupid onlooker. "The wheel-house will be my end of it. If you can reverse your engines and just kick along at slow speed, perhaps I can swing her with the rudder to work

offshore. Captain Strickland was trying to put her on the beach, which is just what we want to avoid. The wind will help us and if the engines can turn over we may haul clear of these Dutch shoals and islands. I think I can guess our position fairly well by studying the chart."

That the *Liberty Chimes*, or what was left of her, might fill up like a tea-kettle in the meantime did not seem to enter into their cheerful calculations. They had faith in the ship as well as in themselves, and Spencer Torrance voiced it for the others.

"This engine-room compartment is as tight as a drum. Look at the floor. No water in it and none leaking through the walls. Think of all the wicked nonsense that Cantwell spouted about these new American ships. Look at this one, for instance! Blown in two by a mine and floating strong and sound! There was never anything like it, I tell you. I take my hat off to Hog Island."

"A fine little speech," said Briscoe, "and true as gospel. I saw torpedoed ships in the War, and this is the eight-thousand-ton baby that puts it over 'em all. But we won't poke around for'ard of this compartment. It may be full of the briny ocean. What we don't know will never hurt us."

"She is n't tipped up as badly as she was," Judson spoke up. "The propeller must be under water again. She righted herself when the front end floated away. See you later, boys. If you want anything, send word up to the acting skipper."

With a globe lantern in his hand, Judson footed it

up the flights of ladders and hurried forward. The ship seemed immensely lonely and desolate. She rolled in the trough of the sea like a lifeless thing. The black and windy night almost frightened the solitary lad now that he was deprived of the comforting presence of his comrades. He had not imagined that the deck of a drifting ship without a crew could be such a mournful place. But he possessed that steady, almost stolid quality of courage which it is hard for a crisis to shake. Briscoe was more alert and quicker to act, but less apt to persevere. Spencer Torrance had the trained, acute intelligence. Together they were a trio for a forlorn hope or to shake dice with Destiny. In Judson's mind was echoing the familiar slogan, "It's a great life if you don't weaken."

He crept to the jagged edge of the forward deck and swung the lantern down. He had not realized what the broken hull would look like. The sight made him gasp. The ship had not been cut in two, but wrenched apart, as though a giant had twisted her in his two hands. On one side, the bent and broken plates extended out a dozen feet. On the other, they had been sheared off closer to the bulkhead. The sea washed and foamed among them like the surf on a reef. It boomed against the bulkhead with the hollow reverberation of distant thunder. This steel cross-wall withstood the incessant assaults, and so far as Judson could discover every rivet was holding firm.

Somewhat reassured, he climbed to the wheel-

house and studied the compass card by the light of the binnacle lamp. Then he turned to the chart which was spread upon the wide shelf of the desk. Shortly before the explosion, they had passed a light-ship with a name and number painted on the side. This gave Judson a clue to the vessel's whereabouts and he knew that she had moved only a few miles since the disaster. The nearest land was five or six miles away, as he reckoned it, and the chart showed that shoal water extended some distance out. The ship was in no danger of stranding, however, unless the currents should set her in or the wind shift to another quarter.

The machinery of the steam steering gear had been jammed somewhere beneath the wheel-house when the exploding mine ripped the deck up. Judson laid hold of the big wooden hand-wheel which loomed as tall as he was, and tried to swing it over. It moved a little and he climbed the spokes with hands and feet, putting all his muscle and weight into the effort. Very slowly the wheel responded and the heavy rudder was moving until it rested amidships. This satisfied the perspiring Judson that with Briscoe to lend a hand, the ship could be swung whenever the engines began to stir.

To an anxious question shouted into the speaking-tube, Briscoe's voice came back:

"Oil pressure feed clogged, but I'm clearing it. She'll steam before long. What does the weather look like?"

"Thickening up again. Misty and raining. It may mean a change of wind."

"Don't let it, Jud. Want to speak to the cultured supercargo?"

"Never mind. Is he taking hold all right?"

"Can a duck swim? I begin to feel respect for a college education. I can make a fireman of him in a week, if the cruise lasts that long."

"Too long for me, Briscoe, James E. Any water leaking in?"

"A trickle under the floor, but the bilge pump will take care of it unless she lays down on me. Say, Jud, listen to something important. Go and burgle the pantry and fetch down a gallon of coffee and a ham and a few loaves of bread and some pies, and any other knick-knacks you see."

"Sure thing. I did n't know it, but that is what ails me. I thought I was losing my nerve."

"Wait a minute, boy. Take a slant in the ice-box. Torrance says the officers' mess had fried chicken for dinner. Hungry? Say, I'm a wolf."

Three separate trips did Judson make down the steep iron stairways, a basket on his arm, before the famished Briscoe was ready to say that he felt strong enough to live a few hours longer. As a shipwrecked mariner, the dread of starvation had ceased to trouble him. It was a bit unusual, this picnic supper in the bottom of the *Liberty Chimes*, and most heartily enjoyed. Spencer Torrance had been crawling into a boiler, by the looks of him, and was smeared with black grease and soot. Briscoe ex-

plained that he had to use him for all kinds of odd jobs, the vessel being short-handed, as you might suspect if you checked up the crew. Torrance munched sandwiches and blinked at his comrades, for he had given up trying to keep his glasses clean.

"Captain Joshua Strickland was always grumbling that a supercargo could n't earn his salary," said he, after serious reflection. "I am inclined to believe that he was wrong."

Reluctantly Judson left them to return to his lonely watch on deck. Down in the warm, lighted engine-room, with these staunch shipmates of his, the adventure was a romance more thrilling than he had read in any book, too gorgeous to have actually happened. When he plunged into the cold and darkness outside, the rain beat in his face and the wind whipped the breath out of him. It was the bitter winter weather of the North Sea that had swooped down to assail the helpless ship. Stumbling and slipping, Judson fought his way to the shelter of the wheel-house and studied the compass and the chart with absorbed, perplexed anxiety. The wind had veered to the northeast and was lashing the shallow, muddy depths of the North Sea with sudden fury. It was driving the ship clear of the nearest shoals and islands, but to the southward of this position the coast of Holland extended much farther out into the North Sea. This was the danger now, that in drifting before the gale the ship would strike before she had passed out into the open water that rolled away to the shores of England.

This much poor Judson was able to comprehend, but the rest of it was all guesswork. He was like a blindfolded man in the midst of ambushed foes.

The training cruise in the *Roanoke* had shown him what a storm was like, but then the vessel had been alive and powerful to grapple with it. And the long combers of the Atlantic were nothing like these confused and broken seas which leaped at a ship with a violence ferocious and unexpected. To send up rockets or burn flares as signals of distress would have been utterly useless. The mist and rain and whirling spindrift closed down around the *Liberty Chimes* no more than a cable's length away. She rolled like a log, with a sickening motion, until Judson wondered whether she intended to turn turtle and make a quick finish of it. The crew had taken all the boats. In case of need, all that could be done was to cut the lashings of a life-raft and try to cling to it.

For a long time Judson shivered in the wheelhouse or ventured out to face the gale on the exposed bridge where he could listen to that alarming clamor of the sea against the bulkhead. When he could no longer endure the suspense of waiting, he called down the engine-room speaking-tube:

"Can you give me any steam? If we don't swing and ease her a little pretty soon, we are in for a smash, Kid."

"It's coming slow," replied a weary voice. "I can't make the oil flow right. Something went wrong with the piping system when we blew up. Salt water in it, maybe."

"Then you can't get the engines going?"

"You said that. I did n't. We have busted into an oil tank and the two of us are dipping the stuff out in buckets and throwing it on the fires. There 's more than one way to skin a cat."

"Bully for you, James E. It's blowing hard and getting worse. I don't want to croak, but it will be a whole lot healthier if we can coax her more to the east'ard."

"Yes, we noticed she was rolling some. I just skidded clear across the floor in a bucket of oil. And there goes the supercargo on his ear. There's only two of us, skipper, dear, so don't get cross."

"Will you really get steam on her?"

"Within one half-hour, buddy, or you can fire me and hire a new engineer. Listen, did you ever hear Torrance swear? It's frightful. He is spittin' crude oil and he just now cut loose with, 'Goodness gracious, Briscoe, I should call this the deuce of a mess.'"

Judson laughed and sent his best regards to the profane supercargo. Their share of the toil was so much heavier than his that he felt like a loafer, but his test was soon to come. The minutes seemed like hours as he waited and worried. It was as much as he could do to keep away from the speaking-tube, but it seemed unfair to trouble Briscoe any more than could be helped. At length a husky voice summoned him again.

"All set, Jud. Do you want me to start her on reverse?"

"We'll try it. I don't know what a piece of a ship will do in weather like this. You can search me. Can you hop up for a few minutes to help me put the wheel over?"

"Watch me fly to it. The professor is groggy, but he can put the oil to her for a little while."

Presently Briscoe staggered into the wheel-house, and together they tugged at the spokes until the ship had a starboard helm. There they held it while the whirling propeller bit the water and strove to pull the vessel astern instead of forging ahead. Judson stared at the compass card, hoping to see her begin to swing. His purpose was to turn her stern-first against the wind and keep her there in order to ease the terrific strain and pressure on the bulkhead which was where the bow should have been. The theory was sound, but the reverse motion of a steamer is slow and clumsy at best and there was the power of the wind and the sea to contend with. No sooner had the *Liberty Chimes* begun to answer her helm and the pull of the screw than the gale smote her broadside on and the waves thrust themselves against her as she slewed in the trough of them.

"It can't be done in a thousand years," panted Briscoe, as he released the wheel and dropped upon a cushioned bench.

"Then we'll shove ahead full speed and see whether the poor old cripple can be made to answer her helm," cried Judson. "It is the one chance, Kid. We simply have got to get her around to turn tail to this gale of wind and work out to sea, if that is possible."

"Let's go," said Briscoe. "Play the long shot while there is steam enough to push her."

They understood what it meant to urge the huge bulk of the ship ahead and vastly increase the pressure of the sea against that straining forward bulkhead. On the other hand, it might mean the salvation of the *Liberty Chimes* if she could be so turned about as to put the wind and sea behind her and manage to creep farther out into the North Sea, away from the sweep of coast which threatened to trap her.

"I'll help you put the wheel hard over and lash it," said Briscoe. "Then you will have to fight it out alone, old top. Torrance don't know how to set the engines ahead, and it will take the two of us to keep steam on her."

Judson nodded assent, and just then the voice of the supercargo came through the tube like the whisper of a tired ghost:

"Can — can — you hear me? I am all out of — out of — b-breath. The steam pressure is dropping — rapidly. And the ship leaks more than she d-did. Is she sinking — may I inquire?"

"Not yet, but soon, old-timer," was Briscoe's cheerful reply. "I'll be there in a jiffy. Remember what the sergeant said to the doughboys when they went over the top? '*Come on, you guys. Do you want to live forever?*'"

## CHAPTER XII

### A SHORT-HANDED CREW

WITHOUT a bow to cut through the seas and thrust them aside, the steamer was like a great square-ended scow which had to push the water in front of it. From his lonely station in the wheel-house, Judson was able to discover that the powerful impulse of the screw had begun very slowly to move the ship ahead. And she was actually turning in obedience to the grip of her rudder. The tumult of water that reared and broke against the bulkhead was louder, more alarming. The poor half portion of a vessel, as Briscoe called it, was shaking as though the limit of her endurance had been reached. One thing was certain. There were no putty rivets in those plates of hers. Already she had achieved far more than her builders had ever expected.

"She *can't* do it, but, by Jingo, I believe she is going to," muttered Judson, who grasped the handle of the engine-room indicator. He was ready to ring the signal to ease or stop her should he hear that horrid grating noise of breaking steel in the direction of the bulkhead. His nerves were so tense that he found himself pushing with all his might against the steel pillar of the indicator.

The vessel's decks were swept again and again, but he was scarcely aware of it. One thing absorbed him

absolutely. Would she collapse and sink before the end of this terrible punishment? He could not believe his eyes when the compass told him that the course was actually southwest by south, but the motion of the steamer was much less violent and she was lifting with a buoyant feeling as the seas toppled and broke astern. The strain on the bulkhead was much easier, but it was necessary to keep her steaming at slow speed in this southerly direction in order to find deep water and an escape from stranding on those deadly banks and shallows of the Dutch coast.

Judson released the lashing of the tall wheel, confident that he could straighten out the vessel's course. A vicious kick of the rudder made the spokes whirl and Judson was flung to the floor. Those big, strong hands of his had never learned to let go and he held on until he was fairly wrenched away and tossed in a heap. His head struck the sharp corner of a grating and he was almost senseless for the moment. When he endeavored to scramble to his feet, a flow of blood blinded his eyes and he was so dizzy that he fell back again.

It was Spencer Torrance who stumbled into the wheel-house, held a lantern to Judson's face, and excitedly exclaimed:

"Goodness gracious, old chap, have you been killed? We could n't raise you in the speaking-tube, and — and — what a deuce of an experience this is!"

"Make that wheel fast," weakly faltered Judson.

"It won't hurt you. Sou'west and steady as she goes. It spun on me when I cast it loose."

Pluckily Torrance did as he was told, although he expected to break a leg or an arm, and then he tugged at Judson who muttered:

"Help me to get outside, on the bridge, will you? It's nothing. Jarred me some — reminds me of football."

Torrance put an arm around him and they swayed out into the rain and spray and wind. Judson stood clinging to the railing, and the biting cold revived him rapidly while the salt water washed and cleansed the cut above his temple.

"Briscoe will have to come up and steer for a little while," said he. "You have n't the beef to hold her and I feel queer and dizzy."

"Very well. I'll send him up, Skipper, but I can't promise to make steam all by myself."

"Do what you can," implored Judson. "It is touch and go between now and daylight. If we are not piled up ashore by then, I think she 'll live. We have got to have more sea room, understand?"

"I understand," quietly answered Torrance.

When Briscoe responded to the summons, he fairly dragged himself into the wheel-house, a battered, dirty, limping scarecrow of a man who had lost his alert energy. Without a word he received instructions and planted himself at the wheel while Judson lent what strength he could. They had much the same emotions, that this was the longest night that had ever been lived since the world began,

and that they yearned and ached for a chance to curl up and sleep. The great adventure was not what it had been cracked up to be. They thought of Torrance, alone and exhausted in the engine-room, unfamiliar with his task, dismayed by the water that washed to and fro on the floor. And yet he was holding a certain amount of steam in the boilers, for the ship was under control and forging stubbornly ahead to find the safer waters of the open sea. An inch at a time, as you might say, she was clawing off a lee shore.

Briscoe steadied the wheel and said to Judson:

"The oil must be feeding better than it was. Feels like those burners were spraying it the way they ought to. We're due for a little bit of luck, buddy."

"We need it, Kid. Anyhow, I'm thankful this is n't a coal-burning steamer. The three of us would have been perfectly helpless."

"Do you think we'd have stayed aboard? Not on your life! I would have known better than that. As a fool performance this is positively my limit."

"I can let you go below in a little while," said Judson. "My dead reckoning may be wrong, but I think we are almost clear of the coast. Oh, if the steam steering gear had n't jammed, the stunt would be so much easier!"

"Yes, and if we had n't bumped into that floating mine, the ship would look a whole lot handsomer. I can't seem to get used to wandering over the North Sea in this amputated, sixty per cent of a

vessel. Don't kick, Jud. Call it a bad dream and let it go at that."

Soon after this, they saw the black night take on a grayish cast that foretold the coming of dawn. There was no brightening of the sky and not a hint of sunrise. All that could be said was that the watery clouds and the muddy, uptossed sea became slowly, mistily visible. This sad semblance of morning disclosed the broken ship and her tragic condition which had been shrouded during the night. It occurred both to "Kid" Briscoe and Judson Wyman that they would never have dared to stay aboard could they have seen what the *Liberty Chimes* looked like when the crew abandoned her. From the windows of the wheel-house and from the bridge on either side they looked almost straight down into the sea that flung itself among the fragments of steel plates and beams which marked the ragged line of the fracture that had cloven the steamer in two. It was like standing on the edge of a surf-washed cliff.

"It makes me feel sick at my stomach," declared Briscoe.

"Here's where you feel sicker. Great Scott, look at that!" yelled Judson, as he threw himself against the wheel.

Ahead of the ship and off to port they saw a white line of breakers spout and tumble on a faint, spectral smear of yellow sand. Upon the low beach the sea flung itself in a devil's dance of thundering combers and wind-driven spray. One frightened

glance and Briscoe jumped for the speaking-tube, but Judson shouted angrily:

"Leave Torrance alone! Do you want to scare him to death? He is doing the best he can. Grab this wheel."

Briscoe obeyed. He heard his master's voice. Judson was the skipper. They had nothing more to say to each other. They stared at the menacing breakers and prayed that the ship might pass clear of this catastrophe which had been dreaded all night long. The shoaling water was marked by a foaming commotion of the sea. To heave the sounding lead and find the depth would have been a waste of effort. The ship would win or she would lose. This was the supreme moment of her tenacious and heroic endeavor to live. The two young mariners in the wheel-house could only watch and wait. They threw the helm over and made the wheel fast.

The ship altered her laborious course a trifle and veered away from the breakers and the misty stretch of yellow sand. Then she wallowed into a patch of turbid, broken water and bumped the bottom. The waves lifted her and she struck again, losing all headway and jarred as though an earthquake had shaken her whole fabric. Judson Wyman's first thought was not of himself and the unpleasant fate of drowning in this raging surf. He felt tremendously sorry for the ship. His eyes filled with tears of disappointment. The poor old *Liberty Chimes* deserved a better finish than this. He ran to the tube and called down to Spencer Torrance:

"Better come on deck. The vessel has stranded. God knows how long she will hold together."

"Thank you, Judson. I felt the shock," replied the supercargo. "It is most annoying, for I am just beginning to get results from the burners."

"Tell him to fetch the coffee-pot and the rest of the sandwiches," growled Briscoe. "I don't propose to eat my life-preserver for breakfast. Well, this looks like a knock-out for the pile of junk that was once a fancy cargo-boat."

"I don't know about that," excitedly cried Judson, for the ship had lifted again and was scraping instead of thumping. With another long, shuddering jar or two, she swung partly around to the pressure of the wind and sea and then rolled into deeper water. It was impossible to believe that she was again floating free. Judson snatched up the binoculars and scanned the waste of water to the south and east. The gray horizon closed down no more than a mile away, but he could see no other shoals or breakers. It was his confident guess that the ship had weathered the outermost point of the westerly bend of the coast of Holland. Beyond her was the wide and open sea, all the way across to the shores of England.

He turned from the bridge and saw Spencer Torrance, who drooped badly, but was by no means conquered in spirit. Letting himself drop upon the cushioned bench or transom, the supercargo murmured pensively:

"On our way again, are we? Whew, I don't know

whether I feel glad or sorry. The idea of staying put strongly appealed to me."

"If you are the kind of gink that dotes on shipwreck, you can have my share of it," said Briscoe. "If you ask me, I prefer to resume the voyage. I wonder if she punched the bottom out of herself. Come along and take a look, my handy buck of a supercargo."

Torrance dragged his aching bones from the cushions, but Judson sharply interfered.

"Let him rest, Kid. You chase yourself below and look things over. All the steam you need is for the pumps. Let the turbines stay dead. We can't keep her moving any longer. It is too much for us. The weather has moderated a little and I am going to let her drift."

"Wise words, Captain Wyman," grinned Briscoe, who was something like himself again. "What's the use of steaming ahead when we don't know where we are going? We pulled ourself out of a hole by our boot-straps. Now if her bottom plates have n't pulled out like a blinking accordeon and the engine-room is n't flooding, I can jolly steam enough for a couple of pumps and a dynamo and snatch a little sleep on and off."

"Sure thing," said Judson. "You can show Torrance what to do, and you can spell each other in two-hour watches. You will be dead men if you don't."

"What about the deck watch?" asked Briscoe. "You are a whale of a skipper, buddy, but there is only one of you."

"I'll take a nap when I have to. Why not? This gale has driven most of the North Sea shipping into port. We're not likely to meet anything that will give us a tow, and it's too rough to pass a hawser besides. And the weather is too thick to see us any distance."

"You don't have to set distress signals, Jud — not on this comical hunk of a ship. One look at us will be enough to tell anybody that the *Liberty Chimes* has seen better days."

"She is not what she was, Kid. Now beat it below and send me the news. She has n't settled any deeper since she touched the shoal."

"The only way to kill this Hog Island baby would be to take it out in the back yard and bust it with an axe," observed the acting chief engineer as he took his departure.

Spencer Torrance was fast asleep, snoring twenty knots, and not in the slightest degree interested in the question of staying afloat or sinking. When the ship took a sudden lurch, he slid to the floor and did not miss even a single snore. Judson tucked a cushion under his head and covered him with the blankets from the captain's room. Then came tidings from Briscoe.

"Hello, brother! I have the honor to report the vessel as still seaworthy. She's in no worse health for bumping the Dutch coast, as far as I can make out. My feet are wet, but why worry? This pump equipment will bale the Atlantic Ocean out of her as soon as I get coupled up. I can fire one boiler and

keep it snoozing along. Two-hour watch, did you say? It will be a crime to wake up Torrance. I can stand four hours more of it."

"So can I, then," stoutly returned Judson, ashamed that he had mentioned taking a nap. "No hard-boiled guy can say that I weakened before he did."

With the best of intentions, Judson's eyes closed and his head dropped whenever he permitted himself to sit down. He went on deck and prowled over the deserted ship until he came to the galley from whence the cooks had fled. There was wood and coal in the bin, and he built a fire in the range to cook a real square meal for the crew of three. After exploring the ice-box he planned a menu of steak, fried potatoes, peas, coffee, and cheese and canned fruit for dessert. It seemed rather absurd to be faring so well, for if ever a ship looked like a wreck it was the *Liberty Chimes*. But as Judson said to himself, it was not at all the kind of shipwreck you read about in stories, and he had ceased to be surprised.

The comforting warmth of the galley range made him so drowsy that he had to go on deck again. The North Sea gale lacked the freezing edge of winter weather in the Atlantic. No ice had formed on the ship, but it was a raw searching cold that chilled one to the bone and made him shiver in the warmest clothing. The rain and mist were still sweeping out of the gray northeast and the sea ran in swollen confusion.

Out of this cloudy murk emerged a brave little steam trawler running home to some English port. The spray almost hid her as she rolled and plunged with the copper flashing to her keel. Her crew, in boots and oilskins, came tumbling out of the tiny cabin to look at the amazing spectacle of the *Liberty Chimes.*

The trawler ran past, as close as her skipper dared, and he bawled through a megaphone, but the wind blew the words away. Judson returned the greeting with a flourish of his cap while the hardy fishermen risked being washed overboard as they waved their arms and yelled a dozen frantic questions. It was their conclusion, no doubt, that this giddy object of a bisected lump of a cargo steamer still had her crew on board and that the very young man on deck was one of the officers. They were able to read the name on her stern as the trawler went reeling on her course, and you may imagine that there was a lively discussion over the tea and kippered herring concerning the Yankee blighters that were driftin' about in a perishin' half of a ship what had no proper business to be afloat.

The incident comforted Judson. It meant that the *Liberty Chimes* would be reported in England and that tugs would be sent out to search for her. Unless the weather cleared, however, it would be like hunting for a needle in a haystack. Oddly enough, Judson had forgotten all about salvage and money as the motive of the great adventure, and he was quite sure that his comrades had the same feeling. This

had been the big thing when the scheme was hatched in the darkened room with the door locked, when Captain Strickland had told his men to abandon the ship — but now the reward seemed ever so much nobler and more worth while, the sense of duty done and victory won if they could bring the good ship safely through this conflict with the sea. Judson's reflections did not put it just this way, but it was what he meant when he said to himself:

"Bless her old soul, she *deserves* to win out. That is all there is to it. And the best job we fellows ever did was to stand by her."

As the hours wore on, he seemed to be walking about in a sort of trance, now fussing about in the galley as a cook, again dragging his aching legs to the bridge as the acting master of the *Liberty Chimes*. When it came time to rouse out Torrance, he shook and slapped and yelled at the exhausted supercargo, who dug his knuckles into his eyes and muttered, between his yawns:

"Young gentlemen of the freshman class, I am surprised at such behavior in a recitation room of Follansbee College. Oh — what the — ouch! — where am I? Pardon me, Judson, what did you say? I must have been asleep for a minute or two."

"Four hours by the clock, Torrance, and I hated like the mischief to disturb you. Dinner will be served at the galley table."

"By Jove, how interesting," murmured the supercargo as he tried to sit up and felt twinges in every stiffened muscle. "I think I once told you I was

not rugged enough for a seafaring life. This voyage has aged me. I am at least one hundred years old."

Just then Briscoe began to clamor at the other end of the speaking-tube. His accents were peevish.

"Send old English Literature down here. Did n't you hear her hit eight bells?"

"He has just come to life, James E. What about letting him eat and your joining us in the galley?"

"Let me look at my fire. Sure, these pumps won't miss me. They are almost human. Eat, did you say? I'm the man that invented that gadget."

It was a hearty meal and well cooked that they found upon a galley table, but the party was not brilliantly sociable. Between bites of steak Briscoe was guilty of dropping knife and fork and popping off asleep with his head on his arm. Spencer Torrance tried hard to be polite and entertaining, but he was doubled up like an old gentleman with chronic lumbago and he groaned every time the ship rolled suddenly. As for Judson he yawned so rudely and so continuously that Briscoe told him to shut it up before somebody slipped and fell in. They made no attempt to discuss the fate of the ship and the voyage or what might happen next. They were beyond wondering about anything. They would have violently doubted your word had you told them that they had been adrift a little less than twenty-four hours.

Briscoe wandered into the nearest stateroom, still munching crackers and cheese, and fell into the bunk like a man sliding off a roof. He opened one

eye just long enough to tell Torrance something about the draft and the pressure and the spraying valve, and Briscoe, James E., was enfolded in earnest slumber. His last words were:

"Forget the pumps. They'll have her dry before night. Never were such pumps! Kiss 'em for me."

Judson intended to set the galley to rights and wash the dishes, but he needed the bracing air. One more turn on the bridge and a look at the empty sea and sodden sky and he concluded that there was nothing really worth staying awake for. In the captain's desk he had found an alarm clock. This he set to go off two hours later and, without a struggle, he kicked off his shoes and crawled into the captain's bed. It might have been more heroic if he had maintained his lonely watch until he dropped in his tracks, but it would have been much less sensible.

The winter afternoon in the North Sea so early faded into dusk that the drifting ship began to loom shadowy and obscure not long after three o'clock. She was wholly lost to sight a little later. Mindful of the rules of the road at sea, Judson did not show the side lights of red and green, but hoisted two red lanterns to the masthead, one above the other, to let other mariners know that the vessel was not under control. Through the long, long night he kept his watch with a patient and enduring fidelity, setting the alarm clock for a respite of an hour or two when it became impossible to fight off sleep and weariness. Far down below the powerful pumps toiled unceasingly while Briscoe and Torrance,

haggard and heavy-eyed, relieved each other punctually. Even in such circumstances as these, the habit of disciplined routine still held sway. And in later years these three seafarers would be able to say, when some other crisis confronted them:

"It can be done somehow. For it can't be any harder than the game we played in the *Liberty Chimes*."

Before morning the gale dropped to a strong breeze, but there was no sign of clearing. Hidden in the drizzling rain and curling wisps of fog, the steamer drifted on her aimless course. The sea had ceased to pound and wrench her with savage hostility. She seemed to bear a charmed life, to be animated by an unconquerable spirit of her own.

When her crew of three met at breakfast in the galley, their spirits had revived and they stayed awake with less difficulty. There was such a thing as getting one's second wind in this ordeal. And the strain had eased a little, with the ship reasonably certain to stay afloat. Judson's face had lost something of that ruddy, boyish look. It was thinner, with a suggestion of that hardness which stamped Briscoe as a man of bitter experiences. As for Spencer Torrance, you never would have suspected that he was a scholar and a gentleman. He was red-eyed, unshaven, with a peeling nose and blistered lips from the furnace heat, and Follansbee College would have chased him off the campus as a vagabond or worse.

"If this dirty weather lifts a little, we may be

picked up before night," said Judson. "No more sleep for me. I can rock along another day."

"Rocky fits me," came from Briscoe. "Old English Literature here says he'd be all right if he did n't creak when he walked. On the level, do you *ever* expect to quit this stove-up Flying Dutchman of a vessel? Supposing she drifts all the way down Channel in this everlastin' smother of fog and stuff. I can see us with white whiskers down to our knees, eh, boy?"

"Oh, she'll sink long before that, James E. I hope Captain Strickland and the crew got ashore all right. It will be a terrible shock to him, to learn that his ship floated. That kind of thing smashes a skipper's career. I wish there was some way to give the *Liberty Chimes* back to him."

"You need shed no tears over him," piped up Torrance. "This was to be his last voyage. He owns an interest in a ship chandlery firm in Philadelphia. He made up his mind to retire from the sea because of poor health, so this affair can do him no serious damage professionally. I am glad of that, even if he did tell me that as a supercargo I was n't worth a hoot in hades."

They were startled by the hoarse blast of a steamer's whistle which fairly lifted them out of their chairs. It sounded close to the ship, and Judson rushed on deck, the others tumbling after him. They gazed at a sturdy seagoing towboat which had fairly blundered on the *Liberty Chimes* while searching in the fog. It was both luck and good seaman-

ship in shrewdly reckoning the steamer's probable drift from the position when the trawler had sighted her. The towboat swept around to bob alongside, and a dripping figure on the tiny bridge shouted in a hurricane of a voice:

"God bless my soul, what sort of a sawed-off Noah's Ark are you? No boats, what? I'll send a hawser aboard. I shall take hold aft and try to yank you stern-first into London River."

"Thanks. You look good to us," yelled Judson. "Where are you from and who sent you out?"

"From Harwich. Ordered to pick you up by the American Shipping Board agent in London."

"Fine and dandy, sir. You will have to send some men aboard. We happen to be shy a crew. There are only three of us."

"Only three of you!" roared the master of the towboat. "My sainted grandmother! Aye, I'll send off a mate and an engineer and a couple of hands."

"Sweet dreams, ladies," exclaimed Briscoe, James E. "I am not to be disturbed until this packet ties up to a dock in London River, not if it takes her a week to get there."

## CHAPTER XIII

### ASHORE IN LONDON PORT

THE *Liberty Chimes* crawled stern-foremost at the end of a trailing hawser, and the towboat looked absurdly like an ant which had undertaken to haul a beetle home. Mercifully relieved from duty, the three weary shipmates were in their bunks, dead to the world and dreaming of other things than steamers that broke in two in the darkness, and straining bulkheads, and breakers that thundered on the misty yellow sands of a lee shore. They were ready to agree that a winter voyage across the Western Ocean made real sailormen. If this was a sample of the adventures that happened to an "ordinary seaman," Judson Wyman wondered what an extraordinary one ought to expect.

He slept until shouts and the tramp of sea-boots on deck aroused him to discover what was going on. Two smaller tugs had come out to help handle the unwieldy burden and they were making fast on either side. Nudging against the *Liberty Chimes*, they coaxed and guided her in from the open sea toward the channel buoys that marked the wide estuary of the Thames. After a while Spencer Torrance limped on deck. A shave, shower bath, and a fresh blue uniform had made him respectable. He looked very worn and tired, as though he had

been through a severe illness. The experience had been much harder for him than for his more robust companions, but he felt a sense of modest pride and gratitude that he had shared it with them and played a man's part. And when the ship and her panting escort of three tugs crept within sight of the red lightship of the Nore Sands, he forgot his aches and the benumbing exhaustion.

He knew by heart the story of this turbid pathway to the sea that sailors call London River, the crowded thoroughfare of a port great and ancient, but this was his first glimpse of it. Judson listened while he talked, and presently Briscoe joined them. He, too, was held silent by the romance of the Thames which, centuries before Columbus steered west to find a new world, had been ploughed by the keels of England's navies and merchant fleets.

In Chatham Reach rode at anchor a grim, gray line of battleships and cruisers which had held the German fleet in check through four long years of toil and vigil in the North Sea. Near by were two wooden three-deckers with painted ports, training ships for the lads of the Royal Navy and reminders of great admirals of far-off years and famous sea-fights, of Rodney, Blake, and Cloudesley Shovel. And on a lawn could be seen an old wooden figure-head of Nelson overlooking the bit of sloping shore from which had been launched the *Victory*, the flag-ship of Trafalgar.

The river narrowed until it was too small to hold the commerce that it bore, and acres of funnels and

masts and spars could be seen in the great docks or basins which had been dug out of the flat landscape far below London. Up past the vast Tilbury docks moved the *Liberty Chimes* and swung close to the stately pillared palace of Charles II, now the seat of Greenwich Observatory, by whose time skippers set their chronometers and reckon their longitude around the world. Then came old Deptford and the Royal Victualling Yard which feeds the Navy somewhat better than when Nelson's hearts of oak fought mightily on a diet of petrified salt pork and mouldy, weevily biscuit. Just beyond was the ancient dockyard where Queen Elizabeth came in state to welcome Drake after his marvelous voyage around the world in the *Golden Hind* and knighted him Sir Francis.

The tugs were guiding the crippled steamer to one of these docks or pools tucked in behind the quays and warehouses, where her cargo could be discharged before she was surveyed for repairs. She floated into scenes which vividly recalled the England of bygone centuries when Drake and Hawkins, and Raleigh and Captain Martin Frobisher were bringing home rich cargoes found in new, mysterious lands, or looted with clash of boarding pike and smoke of carronade from the gilded galleons of the Spanish plate fleets of Manila and Peru.

And farther up the river, in the smoke and haze, were the stone arches of London Bridge, which stood in ruder form a thousand years ago, when beneath its causeway passed Danish galleys with

oars double-banked, Anglo-Saxon merchantmen spreading one huge square sail amidships, Kentish herring fishermen, traders from France and Flanders, and the clumsy little men-of-war of King Edgar's "grand navie" of four thousand sail.

The massive lock-gates opened to let the *Liberty Chimes* move in to a berth and the tugs shoved and hauled this way and that until the American steamer, or what was left of her, rested at her moorings and was safe from the turbulence of the sea. All about her were other cargo steamers, many of them flying the Stars and Stripes, and they showed no marks of conflict. Securely, without mishap, they had finished their voyages from the distant havens of the rolling seas. The three shipmates gazed at them with a curious feeling of wonderment. It was difficult for them to realize that the sea could be kind to ships. They were still dazed, nor had they thought very much about going ashore. Waking up to the situation, Judson exclaimed:

"And so this is London! We seem to be lost in a great city. Who do we belong to, anyhow? We shall have to get off the ship. There is no skipper to report to. Where do we go from here?"

"Sit tight and wait," advised Briscoe. "Unless help comes soon, we'll look for a restaurant within cruising distance of this dock. You are an earnest young cook, Jud, and far be it from me to knock, *but* — "

They were sitting in a row, like orphans of the sea, when a taxi rattled along the quay and two well-

dressed men popped out. One would have surmised them to be better acquainted with business affairs than the mariner's trade. A glance at the shattered *Liberty Chimes* and the exposed, rusty bulkhead which served as her bow, and they stood stock-still as though petrified. It was to be inferred that they had encountered the surprise of their lives. One of them, a plump gentleman with neat gray side whiskers, nodded his head and wagged a forefinger as if arguing that the thing was perfectly preposterous. The other cocked his glasses on his nose and then pointed his cane at the three orphans of the sea who were watching the performance with lively interest.

"Saved!" murmured Briscoe. "The party with the gray spinnakers looks like the rich uncle from India. I've seen that make-up on the stage. Will they ask us out to eat, do you think?"

"Probably throw us in jail for disobeying orders in refusing to abandon ship," was Judson's gloomy comment. "Maybe we are mutineers."

The two gentlemen climbed a ladder with some difficulty and stared at the crew of the *Liberty Chimes* with almost as much astonishment as they had displayed on the quay. The one who wore glasses, a brisk, sharp-featured man, very long and thin, singled out Judson and advanced with outstretched hand.

"I am Captain Prentiss, the London agent of the Shipping Board. May I ask who you are?"

"Judson P. Wyman, ordinary seaman, sir — at present acting master of the U.S. Shipping Board

steamer *Liberty Chimes*," was the reply, in perfectly serious tones.

Captain Prentiss grinned at this, and was introduced, with all dignity, to the supercargo and the acting chief engineer. In turn he presented them to his companion, who was Mr. Arthur Abercrombie, representing Lloyd's Association of Underwriters. The latter gentleman suggested that they sit down in the officers' mess-room and have a bit of a chat. In behalf of the marine insurance interests he was anxious to get at the main facts, said he, and it looked as though these three young Yankee sailors had a queer yarn to spin. This Mr. Abercrombie was quite evidently an Englishman, while Captain Prentiss was just as unmistakably an American.

Before they opened a bombardment of questions, Judson made haste to ask if any word had been received from the master and the crew of the *Liberty Chimes* who had taken to the boats off the coast of Holland.

"Yes, they landed at a little fishing village and were taken to Rotterdam next day," answered Captain Prentiss. "I received a brief report by wire from our agent. The *Liberty Chimes* hit a drifting mine, was blown in two, and abandoned a few hours later when about to founder. Her master was certain that she went to the bottom in the northeasterly gale which began to blow that night."

"The steamer was posted at Lloyd's as a total loss," said Mr. Abercrombie. "Now how did you three men happen to be left on board? Accidentally,

I presume. The boats pushed off in a hurry? They would, from a vessel that is such a frightful object as this one."

"We stayed with her because we wanted to," replied Judson.

"It was a sporty bet," observed Briscoe, James E., "and we win."

"We were interested in saving a very valuable property," explained the scholarly supercargo. "And as long as there was a crew on board, meaning us, the steamer was not a derelict."

"Did n't we put the steam to her and work her off a lee shore?" cried Briscoe. "She was no derelict, let me tell you, even if she had cracked in two."

Mr. Abercrombie thoughtfully stroked those neat gray whiskers and reflected that the yarn was more than queer. It was positively fantastic. Captain Prentiss smiled in a friendly way and seemed to understand. He was a retired captain of the American Navy, and he had known boys like these. They were the kind that had manned the destroyers and yachts and submarine chasers during the War. Led on by his sympathetic queries they told the whole story. It began in the prairie town of Follansbee, North Dakota, and included the training cruise in the good ship *Roanoke*. When it came to the hazardous venture of the *Liberty Chimes* and the furious North Sea, Judson and Spencer Torrance were inclined to sketch it too briefly, afraid of boasting, each young man insisting that the credit belonged to the other two. "Kid" Briscoe was

troubled by no such scruples. He was ready to fill in the details, and, in his opinion, any lads that could pull off a stunt like that deserved a few bouquets. The plump gentleman from Lloyd's listened with an intent interest, but his questions were more searching than those of the American agent of the Shipping Board. It was like a cross-examination, conducted so courteously that no offense could be taken. Finally he said:

"Upon my word, I really did not intend to make this an investigation. There is plenty of time for that, and these young men are pretty well done up. May I have the pleasure of your company at luncheon to-morrow, Mr. Torrance?"

"Thank you, Mr. Abercrombie. I assume that a large amount of the insurance on this cargo was placed with British underwriters. I can show you stowage plans and so on, and tell you what we have saved. There is little damage by water."

"Splendid, Mr. Torrance. I am filled with respect for this Yankee notion of a supercargo. Invaluable in a case like this!"

"If you three young toilers of the sea will come along with me," exclaimed Captain Prentiss, "I shall be glad to tuck you in a comfortable hotel. The expense need not worry you. And to-morrow you will help me prepare a report."

"Do we get our wages for the voyage?" demanded Briscoe. "We signed for the round trip in the *Liberty Chimes*, but we don't feel like taking her all the way home, not right away this minute."

"I will look after all that, Mr. Briscoe. Do you boys need any cash? Perhaps we had better stop at my office."

"I hate to stroll up Piccadilly without a new cane and a pair of lemon-colored spats," lightly remarked Briscoe.

No longer friendless on a foreign shore, they were convoyed to a small and homelike hotel near the Strand with a month's wages in their pockets, to be charged against their ship. Torrance felt seedy and was contented to curl up in a big armchair before a grate fire of blazing coal. Before his comrades went out to see the streets of London, he happened to say:

"How did the man from Lloyd's impress you fellows? I could n't help feeling that Mr. Abercrombie regarded us with suspicion. We have not asked him for salvage or anything else."

"Oh, he has to be from Missouri," carelessly exclaimed Judson. "He will not admit that we have any claim against the ship or cargo until he is dead sure of the evidence. I intend to make no claims. It would spoil the fun. You don't do that kind of a stunt for money. That's one thing I learned."

"Me, too," agreed Briscoe. "The insurance underwriters can find out for themselves that we pumped the water out of the ship and kept her afloat. They'll have to take our word for the rest of it."

Torrance was for discussing the laws and customs of property salvaged at sea, but Judson whanged him over the head with a sofa-pillow, and Briscoe rudely shouted:

"Forget it and take a night off, old top. Anybody that mentions the *Liberty Chimes* to me is liable to hear the church bells tolling for him. As my pals in the British Navy say, 'I am properly fed up with the baily sea.' Come on, Jud. We'll give the music halls a treat, what, what?"

Briscoe proved to be an entertaining guide, for he had visited London on leave in 1918 when his destroyer had escorted a Channel convoy into Plymouth. Then the streets had been darkened and the beastly German air raids were dropping bombs on women and kiddies and demolishing rows of humble dwellings. It had been a city of gloom and suffering, but now the lights shone brilliantly, and the streets were no longer filled with wounded soldiers and Tommies home for a glimpse of Blighty before they went back to the mud and the horrors of Flanders.

Judson enjoyed it all, but there was the uneasy fear that Briscoe might damage his record for good behavior by looking on the rum when it was red. There were temptations enough on every hand to entice a thirsty sailor after a hard voyage. The hard-boiled guy guessed what his comrade had on his mind and said, with a short laugh:

"It begins to look as if I was no more than soft-boiled or medium, buddy. You and Torrance and I get on so well that what's the use of spoiling it? Getting drunk is n't popular with either of you. And I think pretty well of myself just now. I'm all set to be a brass-bound, chesty officer in the

merchant service. And I never did see that booze and promotion mixed worth a cuss. This is my chance, Jud. It won't hurt my record to be known as one of the lads that saved the *Liberty Chimes*."

They laid their course for a vaudeville theater near Trafalgar Square and sat through the entire programme, which was hugely enjoyed. Then Briscoe remembered a little chop-house off the Strand which seemed to be a tidy anchorage for two hungry sailormen, and they found a table in the snug back room. In another corner sat a group of hearty young men whose brown faces had been exposed to wind and weather. Two of them wore the double-breasted blue coats and red sleeve bars of chief petty officers of the Royal Navy. The third man in uniform was a mate of the British merchant service and two others were in civilian clothes. Briscoe glanced at them idly, looked again, and fairly bounced from his chair. Crossing the room in two jumps he fell upon a stalwart, sandy-haired chief gunner's mate, thumped him violently, and cried:

"Hands across the sea, you cock-eyed swab of a lime-juicer! How are you, Paulding, as mysterious as ever?"

The British tar returned the assault by dealing Briscoe an affectionate blow which almost knocked him under the table.

"Hello, Kid, you sculpin of a Yank! Who let you out of jail?"

Having insulted each other in this brotherly fashion, they dragged Judson over to make one

party of it. He learned that Paulding had been in a mystery ship, one of those disguised merchant steamers which the British Navy used as decoys for German submarines. It was the most thrilling and perilous naval service of the Great War, and most of the men who had been engaged in it wore ribbons of honor on their coats. Briscoe's destroyer had picked up a few survivors of the mystery ship *Pandora*, it seemed, after she had been riddled and sunk in a desperate fight with the enemy. With the bight of a line around his waist, Briscoe had jumped overboard to lay hold of this Paulding, who was badly wounded and about to drown. This explains the enthusiastic reunion.

Of course Briscoe had to spin the yarn of the *Liberty Chimes* to this matey of his, for it was just the tale to tickle the heart of a hero of a mystery ship. And while they talked with their heads together, Judson made the acquaintance of the others. They were quiet, pleasant chaps, all of them bred to the sea, one just home from a China voyage in a Blue Funnel freighter, and two of them bound out to Valparaiso in a Diesel-engined tramp. Presently another visitor strolled into the low-raftered back room of the chop-house and stood looking at the party of seafarers instead of seeking a table.

He was a slim, light-footed man, fairly young, with a hint of foreign blood in the swarthy skin and curling black hair. A Spanish or Italian strain, you might have guessed, and yet the curious little slant of the eyes suggested some strange admixture of the Far

East. This, however, might have passed unnoticed unless one had occasion to study him closely. He was a trifle shabby and down at the heel, this was much easier to perceive — shoes cracked, linen not quite clean, clothes in need of pressing. Happening to glance that way, Judson Wyman fancied that the stranger might be a struggling musician or a poet who lived in a garret.

After a moment's hesitation this person moved over to the seafarers' table and spoke to the mate of the Blue Funnel freighter. The latter turned and looked up with a frown of surprise as he said:

"It's you, is it, Mendoza? I have n't seen you for some time. Where have you been?"

"In the Baltic — second greaser of a filthy little collier. I could n't stand the winter weather. Why, hello, here is another old shipmate of mine."

He offered his hand to the man sitting next to the mate, but it was not grasped in greeting nor was there any offer to introduce the other members of the party. The sprightly Mendoza was not in the least ruffled by this chilly welcome. Pulling up a chair he made room for himself and ordered something to eat and drink. Judson wondered what might happen next. It reminded him of watching a scene in a play. If Mendoza was the villain, appearances were deceptive, for there was something engaging in his bright, eager manner of speech and the ready smile. His voice was singularly pleasant, without the slightest foreign flavor. He talked like an Englishman of some education and refinement.

"I rather think I shall take a run over to the United States," he was saying. "The Americans have gone daft on shipping since the War, and you don't have to be a native to get an officer's ticket. I have had rotten hard luck at home, as you may know."

"Hit bottom, have you?" was the indifferent comment. "I dare say it serves you right. You were in trouble in Singapore when I last saw you."

"Oh, that misunderstanding?" laughed Mendoza. "It was all cleared up shortly after you sailed. The British governor behaved like a silly ass. He had some wild idea that I was stirring up the natives. His nerves were very ragged after those Indian regiments mutinied and ran amuck."

"The rumor was that you were mixed up in that," said the mate, "but they could n't prove it. Singapore was glad to get rid of you, I fancy."

Mendoza adroitly changed the subject to safer ground and held their interest with gossip of ships and ports in many seas. He was a fascinating storyteller, the kind of man who is sometimes tolerated by those who suspect him of being a rascal. And it was difficult to get rid of him merely by turning a cold shoulder. He simply ignored that kind of thing. If people disliked him, he exerted himself to win them over. And often he succeeded.

Chief gunner's mate Paulding and Briscoe were still absorbed in their reunion of the Allied Naval Forces, fighting the War all over again in destroyers, mystery ships, and mine-sweepers. They had paid no attention whatever to the latest arrival

until suddenly Paulding glanced around, his ear caught by some remark or other. He stiffened and glared at Mendoza and the blood surged into his ruddy cheek. Puzzled for a moment, he groped in his memory before he was certain of the identity of this entertaining visitor. Then his honest wrath flamed, and he roared like a bull:

"I know who *you* are, you dirty hound! Get out of this! At a table with decent men? The gall of you! Not a bloody word, or I'll bash in your face!"

Mendoza bounded to his feet like a cat and his swarthy, animated face was no longer agreeable. He was vicious, dangerous, and the white teeth gleamed, not in a smile, but a snarl. One hand slid inside his coat.

"Pull a knife on me, will you, you swine of a half-breed?" thundered the chief gunner's mate, and with that he caught up a cane-bottomed chair and swung it over his head. He was a swift man in action and the chair fairly flew to pieces as it crashed down upon the curly pate of Mendoza, who staggered back and fell against another table. Something tinkled on the floor, and Paulding stooped to pick up a long, thin-bladed knife that opened with a spring. Deliberately he caught Mendoza by both shoulders, spun him around and kicked him through a swinging door, along a passageway and out upon the pavement.

Breathing a little harder for the exertion, but otherwise undisturbed, the chief gunner's mate of the Royal Navy remarked as he returned to the table:

"I took good aim and every shot hit the target. My intention was to show this Mendoza that I dislike the sight of him."

"You hinted as much. I should n't wonder if he went out with some such idea," remarked one of the group.

It amused Judson to see how calmly they took this episode. They asked Paulding no questions. It was regarded as his own affair. A frightened waiter had dashed out to summon the landlord of the chop-house, who came bustling in to ejaculate:

"Wot's this breakin' of furniture and disorderly conduct, gentlemen? It ain't customary. I'll 'ave to request you to leave the premises."

"Stow it, grandpop, and fetch us another round of kidney pies," curtly commanded the chief gunner's mate. "I was trying to keep your place respectable. Charge me up with a new chair."

The elderly landlord was about to object to such insolent language, but he caught sight of a bit of colored ribbon on the front of Paulding's blue coat and his manner changed wonderfully. Fairly beaming, he ducked his head in a bow of homage and told the waiter he would look after the gentlemen himself. In accents of awe he murmured:

"A bloomin' V. C. man! A sailor wot won the Victoria Cross! If there's anything you want, sir, just you sing hout an' the 'ouse is yours."

Paulding blushed and looked uncomfortable as he waved the landlord aside. The other Britons sedately waited for him to explain the explosive

departure of Mendoza. "Kid" Briscoe winked at Judson.

They had to keep the lid on their curiosity. Presently Paulding was kind enough to explain:

"That Mendoza rotter, now. A little more and I might ha' lost my temper and been rough with him. It was at Bantry Bay while I was detached for duty with a submarine flotilla, and there's no wilder, lonelier bit of coast all around Ireland. It was a base we used for hunting U-boats, do you see? There was a division of mine-sweepers with us, to keep the war channel clear of the dirty eggs that Fritz was layin' persistent and often, same as he did off Queenstown to annoy the Yankee destroyers.

"Now 't is well known that the German submarines were gettin' secret intelligence from the Irish coast. And it was hard to check it. It was suspected at one time that the enemy had accurate information of our secret war channels which were plotted only on the confidential charts from the Admiralty. We lost a big submarine and two trawlers all in one week, blown up just off Bantry Bay. This Mendoza blighter was an engineer lieutenant in the Trawler Reserve and attached to our mine-sweepin' division. They never caught him with the goods — he was too sharp for that — but he lost his billet, and old Sir Lewis Bayly, the admiral at Queenstown, put him in a safe place somewhere. We had no more trouble with German mines in the war channels. To my mind, it was a moral certainty that Mendoza was the spy that had done the dirty

work. My last mystery ship fitted out in Queenstown and I heard various things that pieced together."

"A plausible, slippery blackguard," said the mate of the Blue Funnel freighter. "He was shady before the War. It was said that he was in on that affair of the *Highland Chief*, the old crock that was scuttled off the Azores for her insurance. Mendoza was second assistant engineer of her. Trust him to open the sea-cocks if there was a price in it. But he was never tried for it. Lied himself out, of course."

"His talk of going to America to find a job is all piffle," said another. "If Mendoza is clearing out of England, it is because the tight little island is too hot for him. Some deviltry or other has caught up with him."

"In my opinion he is an infernal Bolshevist, Harry. A lot of that Soviet gold has been filtering into England. Mendoza would n't be apt to overlook a chance like that."

"A queer-looking duck for an Englishman. How do you account for it?"

"He says he is part Irish, an old Galway family on his mother's side, and a Spanish ancestor who was one of the lot cast up when the galleons of the Armada drove ashore."

"To explain the blackness of him? Clever, but is it true?"

The chief gunner's mate broke away from Briscoe to exclaim, in formidable accents:

"A cross between a Portuguese Jew and a Canton

Chinaman, if you want my opinion? Will you insult the Irish race and sling mud at the gentlemanly people of Spain?"

Soon after this the British and American seafarers bade each other good-night. As Judson walked toward the hotel, he said to Briscoe:

"That was an exciting evening. The chop-house was better than the vaudeville show."

"A snappy little supper party, Jud. When you wish a personally conducted tour of London, do nothing without consulting me. I passed you my word to be good, but I was just wondering how many policemen Paulding and I could lick if we went at it together."

## CHAPTER XIV

### A LONG PACIFIC VOYAGE

THE case of the *Liberty Chimes* seemed to require a good deal of red tape and delay. At the end of a week the three shipmates were still in London. This was no misfortune, for they had earned a brief vacation and there were so many interesting things to see that it was like a holiday tour. Sometimes Spencer Torrance was the guide, and there was nothing stupid in the pilgrimages to the immortal landmarks and memorials of English history. It was far different from reading about them in a classroom. They rambled from Westminster Abbey to the British Museum, and from Whitehall to Hampton Court. And as sailormen they explored the docks and the fascinating jumble of ships with a leathery old Thames waterman to pull them about in a wherry.

Captain Prentiss of the Shipping Board had carefully compared their written statements with the copies of the reports of the master and officers which had been forwarded to his office from Rotterdam. He saw no reason to doubt a word of the story told by the three young men who had stood by the ship. His attitude was most cordial, but he said nothing to indicate why they were being held in London, and this made them a trifle uneasy.

During one of their sessions with him, however, he made clear certain facts of the situation.

"As I size it up," said he, "you had hopes of a dazzling reward in money when you took hold of this big idea. And later you felt well satisfied to have done your duty by the ship. This is fine. I like it immensely. Now you ought to receive a large amount in salvage, for you did, by your own exertions, save this steamer and a large part of her valuable cargo from being a total loss on the coast of Holland. I am absolutely convinced of that. If you had not made steam enough to give her headway that night, she would have stranded and gone to pieces."

"We did not want her to be found adrift as a derelict with nobody on board," explained Spencer Torrance. "That was our chief motive, I think. I knew it would mean salvage claims of hundreds of thousands of dollars by any vessel that happened to pick her up and tow her into port."

"Quite right, Mr. Torrance, and you young men ought to receive a handsome share of the money which you have saved the owners. In this instance, however, the steamer is owned by the United States Government and not by a private company. All expenses of operation are paid by the Shipping Board which merely pays a private company a fixed fee per month for management. So you are really employed by Uncle Sam. As servants of the Federal Government in Washington, there is no provision for paying you a large reward for doing

your duty. Your claim, if you should wish to present one, might be contested on the ground that, after refusing to abandon the ship, you worked to keep her afloat to save your own skins."

"It is decidedly complicated, sir," observed Torrance. "We are not really in the employ of the Baltimore Steamship Company which loaded the steamer and sent her to Rotterdam."

"They hired the crew, but the Government pays the bills," replied Captain Prentiss. "And you know that getting money out of a Washington bureau for such an extraordinary salvage affair as this is slow and uncertain business, even if such a claim should be approved in the operating division of the Shipping Board. I tell you all this because I don't want you to feel disappointed or ill-used. You turned a trick, you see, that was n't at all according to routine rules and regulations."

"Forget it, Captain Prentiss," broke in Briscoe. "I'm the goat. It was me that instigated these two innocent lads. And we'd do it again if we had the chance. The supercargo was full of his admiralty laws and theories which he had n't digested, being new at the game. Just between us, his chatter about salvage went in one of my ears and out of the other."

"Why not? There was nothing to stop it," retorted Torrance, with unlooked-for rudeness.

"A good shot," laughed Judson. "Have you any sailing orders for us, Captain Prentiss?"

"One bit of news, Wyman. You will go to New York as first-class passengers in a liner. I am

looking after that. The Shipping Board can do that much for you, I am glad to say."

"Gilt-edged, eh, boy?" cried Briscoe, dancing a few jig-steps. "Here is where my London tailor gets busy."

"I hope to get you away in the *Baltic* from Liverpool on Saturday," said Captain Prentiss. "Come in to-morrow morning. I may have something more to tell you."

This was reward enough, from their simple and manly point of view, and the dreams of salvage vanished with no very painful regrets. When they reported at the Shipping Board office next day, there was something mysterious in the air of Captain Prentiss, who sent for a taxi and bundled them in. He doubled his long frame into the vehicle with them after a whispered word to the driver and was very jolly and talkative during the ride, but oozed no information whatever. Briscoe darkly suspected that they were about to be thrown into the Tower of London for saving a ship without permission of the Elder Brethren of Trinity House or the Wardens of the Cinque Ports or some of the other funny old duffers that Torrance had told him about.

The taxi halted at the gateway of a dignified gray building which the young men recognized as the home of that ancient and wonderful organization known as Lloyd's Association of Underwriters which is ever so much more than a body of marine insurance agents. It covers every ocean with a network of intelligence that keeps in touch with the

movements of ships and voyages and the hazards of the sea. Captain Prentiss led his guests up the noble stone staircase to a spacious room in which groups of men were reading bulletins as they were posted, or discussing the latest news of freight rates, tonnage, and shipwrecks. Handsomely mounted in a frame of oaken timbers was a brass ship's bell. A gray-bearded porter in robes of blue and crimson just then stepped up to pull the cord of the clapper, and the bell tolled slowly. At the sound the room was hushed, and Captain Prentiss explained to the boys:

"The bell of the *Lutine* frigate! She was wrecked on the coast of Holland more than a hundred years ago. The bell is rung whenever Lloyd's receives the news that a ship has been lost."

"No *Lutine* bell for us, thank God!" murmured Briscoe. "And on the whole, you can give me the *Liberty Chimes*. It listens more cheerful."

At the door of an inner office they were met by that shrewd, well-fed gentleman, Mr. Arthur Abercrombie, who invited them to enter. He had the honor to present them to the Secretary of Lloyd's, Rear-Admiral Inglefield. Somewhat bewildered, the young American mariners shook hands with the tall, elderly man who rose from his desk, and then they noticed that several other persons were in the office. They were members of the honorable and worshipful Committee of Lloyd's. Briscoe whispered to Judson that it looked to him like a general court-martial. The stern, finely cut features of the rear-

admiral were not in the least forbidding, however, as he smiled at the three young men and said:

"After due investigation, it seems proper that Lloyd's should recognize in this manner the valor, seamanship, and skill of the supercargo, the ordinary seaman, and the water-tender who imperiled their own lives in order that they might keep the steamer *Liberty Chimes* afloat. Their conduct was worthy of the high traditions of the naval forces and the merchant marine of the United States, traditions which were so nobly lived up to in the recent operations of the war by sea. In behalf of the Committee of Lloyd's it is my privilege to give to Spencer Torrance, Judson Wyman, and James Briscoe these tokens of the regard in which they are held by British mariners."

With fingers that trembled a little, the three guests received small leather cases and opened them. The gifts were gold watches, but there was something more. Folded underneath each watch was a flat packet of Bank of England notes.

"Just a bit of pocket-money," explained the radiant Mr. Abercrombie. "The fund was oversubscribed, do you see. A lot of our shipmasters were anxious to chip in a bit. It was a very popular thing, I assure you. The watches are really excellent, as reliable as could be found, and I jolly well knew you could use the cash surplus. It is not a reward — the Admiral was quite right — but just to show that we like the way you do things."

Judson Wyman's eyes filled with tears and he

was not ashamed of his emotion. The gold watch and the words that went with it were far more precious than the Bank of England notes to him and his companions. Inside the watchcase Judson found his name engraved and this inscription:

From The Committee of Lloyd's.

In Memory of

S.S. *Liberty Chimes.*

Semper Fidelis!

"'*Semper Fidelis!*' Always faithful," said Judson to himself. "That is a sure star for a sailor to steer his course by, and I hope I can hold fast to it."

It was a busy hour of the day in this region of "the City" where commerce and banking and shipping held sway, but several of the gentlemen tarried to chat with the young American seamen, and with quiet courtesy to make them feel at ease. They avoided flattery and embarrassing praise. The attitude was that a man's duty was to "carry on," and if he did it uncommonly well, he deserved a friendly pat on the back. Presently Captain Prentiss beckoned and the three guests of honor said their thanks and farewells. The only attempt at a speech was by Briscoe, whose feelings were too much for him.

"I sailed and I chummed and I fought submarines with British bluejackets and I'm proud of it. And if the time comes when you need us again, here is one Yankee gob, so help me, that will be there on the first call. The fleet signal for me is, 'Anglo-

Saxons stand together,' and that means these buddies of mine. I don't have to ask them. I thank you."

The surprise party which Captain Prentiss had been so careful to keep secret was an event never to be forgotten by the lads of the *Liberty Chimes*. As they rode back to the Shipping Board office, one of them happened to say that to make it perfect just a word of approval would be welcome from their own maritime people at home. Not that they were looking for compliments, but, after all, they were Americans first.

"The mailed reports have no more than reached there," said Captain Prentiss, "and these Englishmen were able to beat them to the facts. I have something for you, by the way, a cable message received last night. I waited until after the little ceremony at Lloyd's because it might have disturbed you."

"Bad news?" croaked Briscoe. "I knew it. This was all too good to be true."

"Nothing serious. Torrance is ordered to report at Washington, detached from sea service for the present. This is a promotion, as I look at it. I cabled an outline of the facts a week ago, and this is the result. As a supercargo you have made a brilliant success, Torrance, and the system is still on trial, opposed by a good many owners and shipmasters. I imagine that you will be used in the supercargo's training school for a while. You can talk to the recruits as one who knows the game, and they will listen to you as an instructor."

"But I am anxious to get to sea in another ship," exclaimed Torrance.

"You are too loyal to hesitate to help the cause of the American merchant marine," smiled Captain Prentiss.

"We expected to sail together again," sighed Judson. "This breaks up the combination."

"You will be together as officers in a year or so, at the pace you have set," suggested Captain Prentiss.

"Don't crab it, Jud," chided Briscoe. "This Torrance guy has brains and they always need 'em in Washington. We'll meet him at sea again. You can't bust up this three-of-a-kind as easy as that. The *Liberty Chimes* Club may scatter, but she'll never disband."

Three days after this they were on board the White Star liner *Baltic* as she steamed down the Mersey and passed the stately miles of stone docks that lined the shore of Liverpool. There were not many passengers for this winter voyage to the westward, and, alas, no pretty girls to be entertained by three young seafarers who were sociably inclined. It was vastly pleasant, however, to be crossing the ocean in this care-free comfort and luxury, with no watches to stand on deck or below, and a snug stateroom when the weather was ugly.

At their table in the dining-saloon was a young man, an American, not much older than Torrance, to whom they took a great fancy. He was not one to talk about himself or his business, but he had

been a great traveler and seemed at home in many queer corners of the earth. Judson guessed him to be a mining engineer, while Torrance thought he might be an agent for some firm in the foreign export trade. They said nothing about their own vocation, for it was enjoyable to forget they were sailors for a little while.

This attractive acquaintance seemed to find them congenial, and they loafed together in the smoking-room while the liner was running down through the Irish Sea. He was a square-jawed, clear-eyed young man, with something of Briscoe's compact and athletic build. It was evident that he had handled men and was sure of himself, but without the slightest trace of bluster. He casually mentioned that his name was Sharpe and they gave him their names so that he could tell them apart. At this he looked at them hard, but made no comment, and the talk drifted along general lines, impressions of England after the War, American politics, and so on. His opinions were vigorously expressed and exceedingly well informed.

They were walking on deck in the evening when a mite of a cabin boy in a tight jacket came running after them with a blue envelope.

"Beg pardon, but I say, is one of you gentlemen Captain Malcolm Sharpe? Thank you, sir. A message from the radio-room, sir."

The pleasant young man read the wireless message, frowned at it with marked annoyance, and rammed it in a pocket. After another turn around

the deck, during which he was rather silent, he said in apology:

"I broke off in the middle of a story. You must excuse me. I was hoping to spend a week or two at home, but my ship will be loaded and ready to sail as soon as we land in New York. I shall have to get a radio off to my wife to come on from Ohio and meet me."

The three comrades gazed at Captain Malcolm Sharpe and then at each other. They were comically taken aback. He had seemed to them almost a youngster, like themselves. And yet a man never spoke of "his ship" in just that tone of voice unless he was the master of her. It was Spencer Torrance who found voice to say, with sudden deference:

"You are in the merchant service, sir? We never suspected it. We are just off an American ship ourselves."

"Oh, I knew that," laughed Captain Malcolm Sharpe. "I recognized your names as soon as you mentioned them. The London newspapers printed snap-shots of the *Liberty Chimes* in dock and I read an account of the ceremony at Lloyd's. I have been waiting to hear what you had to say for yourselves."

"To see whether we were going to blow about it?" suggested Judson, who was sometimes not so slow as he looked.

"Perhaps that was it," confessed the boyish Captain Sharpe. "You have caught me with the goods, Wyman. It was my way of getting a slant on you."

"You were very careful to hide the fact that you are a seafaring man yourself, sir."

"There is the reason. You just said it, Wyman, when you called me '*sir*.' Your manner changed as soon as you knew I commanded a merchant vessel. It made you remember that you were an ordinary seaman. We are friends and passengers together for this voyage."

"We are glad to hear you feel that way, Captain Sharpe. But it has sort of knocked us silly. We never met a shipmaster like you."

"Such a mere infant? And no nautical lingo? Well, I am perfectly willing to tell you all about it, now that we understand each other. Supposing we adjourn to that cozy corner in the smoking-room. I like to talk shop. Every man does."

Until late in the evening they listened or asked questions or talked of their own experiences when urged to. Captain Malcolm Sharpe had a motive in sketching his own career, nor was it the vanity of a young man who had been remarkably successful in his profession. These three boys, as he called them, were staunch, ambitious Americans who had chosen the new merchant marine as their job. Two of them had been in a training ship and the third had been sent out from the supercargo's school. It was this kind of material which must officer and man American ships. Without them the new era of the Stars and Stripes on blue water would be no more than a dramatic episode, an accident of war.

Captain Malcolm Sharpe was an example of

what these youngsters might hope to achieve. This was what he desired to show them. He belonged to a different breed of mariners from the middle-aged shipmasters who had known long years of poor pay and slow promotion and hard living.

"You may call me unusually lucky," said he, "but the fact remains that it can be done. And nobody would have dreamed of such a thing a few years ago. I worked hard and studied hard, just as you fellows expect to do, and I have been following the sea only seven years. To be the master of an ocean-going steamer with a salary of four thousand dollars at the age of twenty-five is a mark worth aiming at, I think, if you like the sea."

"At the age of twenty-five!" gasped Judson. "Whew, you must be smarter than chain lightning, Captain Sharpe."

"Nobody used to think so at home. The opportunity is what I am driving at. The chance of promotion is there and waiting, and you will soon see lots of young men in command of fine American ships. Why not? Mr. Torrance here knows the story of the old merchant marine and I intend to pry more of it out of him. He will tell you that many a famous old ship that made a fortune for her owners had mere lads on the quarterdeck. It was a much bigger thing to take a vessel around the world in those days than it is now and it demanded far more real seamanship. How about it, Mr. Torrance?"

"Right you are. I was thinking of Nathaniel Silsbee of Salem who was a captain in the East

India trade at nineteen. His two brothers had ships of their own before they were twenty. It was n't at all surprising, a hundred years ago, to find a tall American ship in some foreign port with a master, chief officer, and second mate all too young to vote."

"And yet this International Seamen's Union tries to tell you and me that it takes three years to make an able seaman!" exclaimed Captain Sharpe. "International bosh! What we want is an American seamen's union. However, you can dodge all that, Wyman, by attending an officer's school at the end of a year."

"We have planned to get some books in New York and begin grinding," said Judson. "If you would be kind enough to give us any advice —"

"I can do better than that. I told you I had been looking you over. And the *Liberty Chimes* affair is chalked up to your credit. Why not sign on with me? I want a good crew. And it will be an interesting voyage if you like a long run in fine weather."

Judson's eyes sparkled and Briscoe grinned. They had found a hero and a skipper after their own hearts in this Captain Malcolm Sharpe, aged twenty-five. Only Torrance looked unhappy. It meant the parting of the road.

"Where are you bound?" asked Judson.

"To the Dutch East Indies — from New York through the Panama Canal, and across the Pacific to Batavia, Massacar, Soerabaia, and Samarang."

The names of these ports was enough to kindle the imagination. They were pure romance. Cap-

tain Sharpe really need not have said another word, but he had another argument to offer.

"I hope to pick up more of you training-ship lads. And I shall be glad, and my officers as well, to help you with your navigation and engineering. There will be plenty of time for it on a long jog like that."

"You have signed a water-tender, or I can qualify as an oiler," observed Briscoe. "And you won't have to drag me aboard. I've done my duty by the Western Ocean for some little time. And it amuses me to think of hitting the beach at Massacar and Samarang, whatever they are. Anyhow, they're sure to be different."

"I planned to go home and see my folks in North Dakota," said Judson, "and Briscoe was going with me. We had a windfall in London, some extra money to spend. But we can't let this voyage get away from us. We are anxious to sail with you, sir."

"Good enough!" exclaimed Captain Sharpe. "I have n't seen the ship yet. My owners recently chartered her from the Shipping Board. I took another steamer to Antwerp and delivered her to a Belgian company which had bought her. That is how I happen to be going home in the *Baltic* as a passenger."

No more than a week later than this, Judson Wyman and Briscoe, James E., were enjoying a brief glimpse of Broadway before they went outward-bound again. They spent their money royally on gifts for the folks at home, and Briscoe made a surprising confession:

"That Latin stuff in the back of my watch, Jud — '*semper fidelis*' — it means always on the level. And I guess it's a good motto for us veterans of the *Liberty Chimes*, as long as we stick together. Remember when I first met you, when we joined up in the Sea Service recruiting office in Minneapolis? And how you knocked a flask of whiskey out of my fist, in the train when we started East? Well, I had a few in me and my tongue was loose and free. I told you about jumping the town because I had stove up a limousine for an old boy I was chauffeur for."

"Yes, I remember," said Judson. "You were beating it for the open sea two or three jumps ahead of the police."

"The same! It sounds foolish, but I've got a hundred dollars left, and here's where I slip it out to the old gink, on account, to help square the repair bill for my joy-ride. How does it listen to you?"

"It listens like *semper fidelis* to me, Kid, and I am proud of you."

"I kind of thought I'd like to start clean for Massacar and Samarang. They don't sound to me as if you ever came back from 'em — 'specially that Massacar stuff. However, what's life worth if you don't live it?"

"Wow, but I did hate to put Torrance on a train for Washington," mourned Judson.

"Never mind, boy. He'll educate those birds, same as he did us. There's one lad that college did n't seem to hurt a bit."

With sea kits overhauled and clothes for tropic

seas and trade winds, they joined their new ship at a wharf in Hoboken. This *True American* was a big, wall-sided brute of a cargo steamer, built for use and not for beauty. You would have wondered how many thousand tons of cargo it must have taken to fill the immense caverns of her holds and to bring her down to the marks at which she rode deep-laden. She was a new vessel, one of the war-built fleet, and larger than those trim freighters which had been so magically fitted together and launched at Hog Island. With a sailor's eye for graceful lines, Judson felt mildly disappointed. This uncouth monster, with her stub-nosed black hull and towering yellow superstructure, defied the noble traditions of the sea. But modern commerce has no thought for romance, and the best ship is the one that earns the most dollars.

For the most part, the crew had been already engaged when Captain Malcolm Sharpe came on from England, and so he was unable to select the officers and men according to his own liking. Every day's delay, now that the steamer was ready for sea, meant a loss of thousands of dollars to the owners. It was a better crew than the average, however, and Captain Sharpe insisted upon weeding out several hopeless cases at the last moment. Judson discovered half a dozen competent Americans in the forecastle.

There was no time to swap yarns, for there was much work to be done in these last confused hours before sailing. That same afternoon the *True Amer-*

*ican* bellowed a fare-ye-well from her deep-throated whistle and backed out into the stream. After nightfall she passed out by Sandy Hook, and the twin lights of Navesink gleamed astern like jewels when Briscoe came on deck and made it his business to find Judson. Something had occurred to give the self-possessed Briscoe a severe shock. His manner showed it as he took his buddy by the arm and led him to the secluded lee of a ventilator.

"Listen, Jud," he began in a voice carefully hushed. "You remember the party in the chop-house that night in London — when I met Paulding, the chief gunner's mate in the British Navy. And we ate supper with him and his friends?"

"I should say I do, Kid. And that chap that looked like a Dago drifted in and joined us. All hands were sore on him, but he could n't take a hint, and then your friend Paulding blew up with a loud report and smashed a perfectly good chair on this person's head."

"And kicked him all the way out to the street, Jud. Paulding surely did have some muzzle velocity. Well, as I was about to say — "

"What was that rooster's name?" broke in Judson. "Wait a minute. Mendoza! That's what they called him."

"Mendoza is right, but they called him worse things than that. Not to string this plot out and keep you in suspense, boy, this kinky-headed, limber-tongued son-of-a-sea-cook of a Mendoza is aboard this ship as a fireman. He did n't recog-

nize me and maybe he won't. He was n't paying any attention to you and me that night, and Paulding put a crimp in his memory, all right."

"This Mendoza makes trouble wherever he goes," said Judson. "Those English seafaring men called him a German spy and a Bolshevist and every hard name they could think of."

"Bad medicine, son, believe me. They slipped us a Jonah this time."

## CHAPTER XV

### A MUTINY IS NIPPED

THE *True American* had passed through the Panama Canal and was moving in the immense and solitary spaces of the Pacific Ocean. Like a carpet of blue the sea unrolled itself day after day in glittering serenity. New stars blazed in a velvet sky which was seldom obscured by rain or clouds. The steamer's course was so close to the Equator that the winds were small and fitful and she ran through vast stretches of calm which would have held a sailing ship in blistering idleness. There was never a gleam of canvas or the smudge of a funnel's smoke to awaken interest and break the monotony of this unending tranquil weather. At a stolid gait of ten knots, the *True American* was plodding toward the journey's end that lay five thousand miles beyond her bow.

Her crew worked no more than enough to keep them hungry and healthy. They suffered none of the discomforts of a long tropical voyage in days gone by. Electric fans hummed in the mess-rooms. Meat, fish, and vegetables were kept fresh in the refrigerating-room. There was no turning out to face winter gales and flooded decks. The work was well done, and the ship had been kept smart and clean. This was what Captain Malcolm Sharpe required. It was

no more than an efficient commander had a right to expect.

There was more or less grumbling, but this he took as a matter of course. It had increased, he noticed, after the steamer left the Canal, and this was somewhat unusual, for there had been time to shake down into the sea routine since leaving New York. His officers remarked on a slackening up among the men of the deck watches and the chief engineer complained of trouble in making steam. There was nothing very definite beyond a lazy, irritable spirit that might have been accounted for by the torrid weather and the lack of diversion. Now and then a man flared up at a word of reproof and showed a flash of ugliness, but it never went as far as disobedience.

All this worried the youthful captain who prided himself on keeping a ship contented.

Judson Wyman, ordinary seaman, had no fault to find, and, at first, the sulky attitude of a good many of the crew perplexed him. There had been no sign of this spirit during the early days of the voyage. Briscoe had reported that he seemed to have guessed wrong in calling Mendoza a Jonah and a trouble-maker. There was no better fireman in the ship than this swarthy, active person who had been denounced as so many kinds of a rascal.

"I can't make him out, Jud," said Briscoe as they walked together in the starlight. "You heard him say in London that he expected to get an engineer's berth in an American ship. All bluff, as I told you

then. He wanted to lose himself, quick. He must have slid out of England in the stoke-hole of a liner just ahead of us, and then he hurdled aboard this *True American* steamer as soon as he hit New York. She was bound to Massacar and Samarang, that's why. Mendoza liked the geography of 'em, they are so far off from everywheres else."

"Have you any more dope to offer?" asked Judson.

"My head aches. I've been giving an imitation of a man trying to think. This Mendoza is so smooth that he makes most smooth guys seem rough as sandpaper. Here is one idea for you to look over with your well-known horse sense. There is a lot of dirty feeling in this ship. I can't swear that Mendoza is at the bottom of it, though I've watched him like a hawk. If he is the bad actor, he put off starting anything until we were in the Pacific."

"Because he was afraid Captain Sharpe might find him out and get rid of him at the Canal?" queried Judson.

"That's one reason. Another is that the men had no grievance that he could twist to suit his own purpose. You can't start a fire without kindling. That night we lay alongside the wharf at Balboa, the skipper refused 'em shore liberty. He knew that a few would get drunk and be robbed and beat up in Panama. And those Spiggoty police just love to run American sailors into the calaboose."

"I knew that some of the men were sore because they were held on board, Kid, but the decent men

thought it was perfectly proper. It might have delayed the ship."

"Two sailors and three firemen sneaked off, Jud — down a rope astern and into a nigger boatman's skiff. The skipper caught them when they came back. They were in bad order, and he did more than fine them two days' pay. He locked 'em up on bread and water until we were out at sea. They hollered about their precious rights and the union rules and the American laws, but a lot of good it did 'em."

"I thought that all blew over," said Judson. "I heard a couple of those men say it served them right."

"You would n't hear much about it, Jud. Captain Sharpe has stopped to speak to you once in a while, and those tough birds think you're a pet of his. And you know how they feel toward lads from the sea training service. You got up against a bit of it in the fo'castle of the *Liberty Chimes*."

"And you suspect that Mendoza is using this grudge to stir the men up?"

"It's no more than a hunch, Jud. What is his object? Why is a Bolshevist? Their game seems to be to upset order and decency and discipline wherever they find it. They've been doing it in American mills and factories, and why not in an American ship? Is n't it the same crazy war against capital? Those wild-eyed nuts would tell you that this three million dollars' worth of vessel and cargo belongs to the poor working-man, and by that they mean

any greasy tramp that goes shy of a shave or a wash or a change of socks."

"Then had n't we ought to tell the skipper what we know about Mendoza?" was Judson's suggestion.

"What do we really know?" replied Briscoe, evidently puzzled. "Those Englishmen did n't actually hang anything on him. It was all guess-work, even with Paulding, the chief gunner's mate, when he erupted like a depth-charge. England was daffy over spy stories during the War. They believed everything they heard, and then some more. This chipper young Captain Sharpe is keeping his eye lifted every minute. He is trying to locate the trouble, and when he finds it, he'll come down hard."

"And if Mendoza gets wind that he is under suspicion, through anything we report, it will be just so much harder to get him with the goods."

"Exactly, Jud. And no proper skipper likes to be told his business by an ordinary seaman or a mug from the stoke-hole. Let it simmer a few days. I may pick up something."

While they talked, a group of men who found it too hot to sleep had clustered outside a door of one of the deck-houses. Somebody was telling stories which aroused applause and laughter. Briscoe recognized the agreeable voice of Mendoza. Presently he began to sing while one of the seamen thrummed a guitar. The deck was hushed and the officers listened from the bridge while the tenor voice,

clear and strong and true, sang a sea ballad that pulled at the heart-strings of these lonely and sentimental pilgrims of the deep:

"Last night when I left her, my true love was weeping
For sorrow at parting, but parting must be:
What use for her tears, and what use to be keeping
A lad by the fireside that follows the sea?
For the cold day 's a-breaking, the town hardly waking,
The moon like a ghost in the pale morning sky,
And the Blue Peter 's blowing to tell ye we're going,
And the gulls in the river all calling good-bye!"

A shaft of light from the open doorway framed the singer against the soft gloom of the night. Barefooted, wearing white trousers and a sleeveless shirt, with a knotted sash for a belt, Mendoza was a romantic and engaging figure. He talked like an Englishman, and yet he neither looked nor sang like one. You would have said that he belonged on some shore of the Mediterranean, this lithe, dark rover with the emotional appeal in his tenor voice. His audience begged for another song, and he began:

"Oh, it 's ah fare you well, for the deep sea 's crying,
You thought you could forget it, but it 's no use trying,
Trying to forget it when it calls you so! . . .
Hey, Deep Water Johnny, kiss your girl and go!"

The ship's bell rang the hour, and the men moved away to change the watches. It was like breaking a spell which had wafted them to dear and distant places. Judson Wyman awoke from a reverie and murmured pensively:

"A man who can sing like that can't be as bad as he is painted, Briscoe, James E."

"Don't fool yourself. The gob that sang bass in our destroyer quartet touched me for ten dollars, and he still owes me. Music and morals don't mean the same thing. Nero was some boy with a fiddle, but you never heard the fire insurance agents of Rome beggin' him for an encore."

Two or three days later the second mate reported that a seaman had been found asleep on lookout duty. The indignant mate cuffed the slacker awake and hauled him to his feet by the collar. Keeping strictly to the letter of the law, the captain logged a fine of two days' pay against the man, but this was not the end of it. A forecastle committee went forward to interview the captain and protested that the second mate had struck and abused the sailor. This was almost too much for the temper of Captain Malcolm Sharpe, but he curtly dismissed the complaint and warned the delegation that he proposed to be the master of his vessel.

The trouble, which had been like a turbid undercurrent, now began to rise to the surface. Judson heard the foreign seamen cursing the skipper among themselves as a swell-headed boy who was trying to play the old-style sea bully. The crew was dividing itself into two groups, most of the native Americans, the Scotch, and an Irishman or two, on the side of law and order, and the harder element, from several nations, shirking duty and increasingly difficult to handle. Captain Malcolm Sharpe was too clever a man to employ rough tactics unless driven to it. He well knew that the master of a ship

could no longer be a tyrant. This had passed away with the old order of things at sea. The rights of the sailor were now so jealously safeguarded that to maintain a proper degree of authority had become the most difficult part of an officer's task.

The breaking strain was near when the chief engineer trudged up to the captain's room and eased his mind of his own anxieties. He was a sallow, round-shouldered man, old enough to be Malcolm Sharpe's father.

"We have been doing no better than seven knots this last twenty-four hours," said he. "You asked me last night why the ship had slowed down, and I could n't tell you. That is, the reasons I gave did n't account for it. This is not a well-built ship, as you know, and I have had one thing go wrong after another, leaky tubes, hot bearings, and the worst oil-burning system that was ever set up in a boiler-room. But we tinkered and remedied defects until we had her making her time, as you know."

"And then she laid down on you, Chief. What have you discovered now?"

"Emery powder in a bearing for one thing; a couple of loose nuts under a valve for another; and a circulating pump that was deliberately smashed. What's more, a Russian fireman told my third assistant that the ship would n't make her proper steam until you disrated your second mate for using his fists on the seaman he caught asleep on lookout duty."

"A stoke-hole soviet, eh, Chief?" said Captain

Sharpe, with a shrug. "Disrate my second officer? That's pretty good. The beggars will court-martial me next. How far has the thing spread, do you think?"

"The worst of it is in the third assistant's watch. They are not quite ready to show their hand, in my opinion. This big Russian got excited and blurted it out about the second mate. He looked scared a moment after, as if he wished he had n't."

"Thank you, Chief. It's a relief to have the pot boil over. I'll just go below with you and have a look around."

"A good time to cast your eye over it, Captain. The third's watch is on duty."

Turning to a cupboard, Captain Sharpe took out an automatic pistol and a pair of handcuffs. He said nothing to the chief officer. This was a situation which the master preferred to meet alone. In fact, there was no other way to meet it. To command a big steamer at the age of twenty-five was an enviable position, but it carried with it grave responsibilities, and they meant that he must stand upon his own two feet, master in fact as well as in name. There was a touch of sadness in his strong, resolute face, of disappointment that his men should prove disloyal, but there was not a trace of fear.

The chief engineer followed him down into the brightly lighted boiler-room. Word of his visit passed so swiftly, as though by secret signal, that in a few moments several of the engine-room force came into the compartment on one pretext or an-

other and loitered there. Two or three other men who were off duty found some excuse to join the group. At a nod from Captain Sharpe, the chief engineer let them stay.

The man most alert and attentive to his duty was the fireman Mendoza. His hand flew up in a graceful salute as the captain glanced in his direction. Every motion indicated that, if they were all like him, the ship would make more steam than she could use.

"Have you had any trouble with that Spanish onion, or whatever he is, Chief? I mean the tenor song-bird," carelessly asked the skipper.

"Mendoza? Not a mite. He talks a lot and has seen better days, quite the gentleman waster, but I have n't found any harm in him."

"He seems to be a first-rate fireman. Which is the Russian?"

The chief pointed out a hulking, bearded man who had found something to do at the farthest boiler, as though desiring to avoid notice.

"Tell him to come here, Chief," said Captain Sharpe, without raising his voice.

As the Russian obeyed the summons, every other man in the boiler-room stood still and gazed at the captain. Nobody spoke. While the hairy, half-naked Russian was shuffling across the floor gratings, "Kid" Briscoe slipped in and softly closed the steel door behind him. He had seen the captain go below, and it occurred to him that a hard-boiled guy might find something to do. The Russian stood

facing Captain Sharpe, who said nothing, but let him stand there wiping the sweat from his face. It was a tableau which was viewed by tense and watchful spectators. The Russian's eyes wandered furtively from one to another, appealing for support and sympathy. Suddenly the skipper spoke, and every word carried above the roaring of the fires in the furnaces.

"You have been talking mutiny, my man. You intend to refuse duty unless I disrate the second officer?"

The Russian fireman rubbed his head in a helpless manner and stammered something in a low voice. Malcolm Sharpe caught the last few words and rapped out:

"Decided by vote, was it? And you were led by the nose. You are too dumb to hatch anything yourself."

Again the fireman let his gaze rove. The captain appeared to be thoughtfully considering the next question as he studied the intent faces of the audience which had begun to edge a little closer. Something seemed to restrain them from open rebellion. They might have been waiting for some word or sign. This was one plausible inference. They heard the captain say:

"Who put you up to it? Do you realize what mutiny means? This is an American ship. You are not in Russia."

The only reply was a stupid, frightened stare. The tension of the other men relaxed. One winked

and another grinned. The Russian would stand the gaff. He had no intention of giving his comrades away. The captain could prove nothing by him. All they had to do was to deny everything and swear that the poor boob of a Russian had gone crazy with the heat. The joke was on the kid skipper. They began to think that Captain Sharpe was losing his nerve. Apparently he did not know what to do next as he stood frowning at the Russian fireman, his hands rammed into the side pockets of his white coat. One of the men tittered.

Then things happened very swiftly. And they were so unexpected that the mutineers stood in their tracks and blinked, their wits hung on a dead center. The Russian fireman was shoved aside like a wooden dummy. He staggered against a furnace door with a yell of pained surprise. Having cleared the way, Captain Sharpe ran straight at Mendoza, or, as Briscoe said, it seemed as if he lit on him from a standing broad jump. Mendoza had no more time to dodge than if a boiler had exploded. For a moment the two figures were locked in a whirling, frantic struggle. Then it was seen that the captain's two hands were at Mendoza's throat. They strained and swayed and one of the captain's hands slid into a coat pocket. The glint of the steel handcuffs, a click, and one of Mendoza's wrists was locked. His other arm was twisted with a grip that made him groan. A second click, and both his wrists were pinioned, with a few links of chain between. He had been caught so wholly off his guard that his face

wore the dazed snarl of an animal that feels the shock of a hunter's bullet.

Captain Sharpe stepped back and turned toward the group of silent men. A hand was in the other side pocket, but he let it rest there. Catching sight of Briscoe, who was at his elbow, all set for action, he exclaimed:

"Hello, Kid, who invited you to the party? Take this man on deck and turn him over to the chief officer. I know *you*."

"Aye, sir. Here, you Mendoza. Let's go. The soviet is disbanded."

He shoved the captive ahead of him and they passed through the doorway in the bulkhead. Captain Sharpe crooked his finger at the Russian fireman, who obeyed like a beaten dog.

"You, too — on deck. Lively, now. Go to your quarters. I'll be there directly."

The men were mere spectators. Not one of them stirred. There was no leader. Cold contempt curled the skipper's lip as he said:

"Any more mutineers? Now is the time to step up. All right, if this ship does n't carry her steam, I'll come down again. Turn 'em to, Chief. And run the loafers out of here, every man that is off watch."

Captain Malcolm Sharpe slowly, watchfully backed in the direction of the door and not a hand was raised against him. The chief engineer followed him to say:

"Beautifully done. I never saw the beat of it.

But it has me mystified. Mendoza was the head devil, no doubt of it. They wilted the minute you nabbed him. How in Sam Hill did you — "

"Join me after supper and I'll tell you, Chief. There will be no more trouble with the men this voyage. Want to bet me a new hat on it?"

Mendoza had been taken into the chart-room to await the captain's orders. First, however, Malcolm Sharpe went into his own room and bolted the door. He needed a little time in which to pull himself together. After scrubbing his face and hands in the bathroom, he changed into a fresh white uniform and sat down to rest upon the edge of his bed. He felt oddly weak in the knees and his hand was not quite steady. The affair had taken a lot out of him, as he began to realize. During his brief career as a master there had been nothing at all like it. His seven years at sea had been quite uneventful, in fact — routine duty and rapid promotion. Well, thank God, he had not been found wanting and he had put it through alone. And he had not even pulled a pistol on his men. It might have been a very nasty business.

Quite himself again, he stepped outside and found Briscoe who was waiting to say:

"Excuse me, sir, but I know a thing or two about this Mendoza's record, and maybe you ought to hear it before you give him the third degree."

"Snap it out, Briscoe. Why did n't you come to me sooner with it?"

"Because I had no more than foggy suspicion to

go on, for one thing. And it's just as well that I did n't meddle. You are glad that you dealt the cards and played the hand out all by yourself, sir."

"You are a very keen young man," smiled Captain Sharpe. "I was just now congratulating myself on that very same thing."

Rapidly Briscoe sketched the encounter with Mendoza in the London chop-house and the black stories that were afloat about him, from Singapore to the Irish Sea.

"Very interesting. A chronic outlaw," was the comment. "And now it's this Bolshevist stuff. He hoped to make a lunatic asylum of this ship. He will be harmless for some time."

"I wish he had given you a good excuse to drill a hole through him," said Briscoe.

In the chart-room the captain found Mendoza seated at his ease and humming a haunting little melody about a lady and a red, red rose. The handcuffs rather marred the effect of his debonair pose. Captain Sharpe had never looked at him closely until now. There were curiously mixed strains in that mongrel blood of his, was the conclusion — something very different from Spanish and Irish as he proudly proclaimed.

"You understand, of course, Captain Sharpe, that you are liable to heavy damages and trial in court for committing this assault on me," began Mendoza, in the rôle of an indignant gentleman.

"Cut out that nonsense," was the stern reply. "I know the American Seaman's Law. It was never

meant to protect blackguards like you. It was your deliberate plot to endanger the safety of this vessel and the lives of her people. That is enough for me."

"But why accuse me of such a crime? What proof have you?" demanded Mendoza, with a trifle less assurance. "Surely I have done my duty in the fire-room. Ask your engineers."

"I shall waste precious little time on you," exclaimed the skipper. "If you have anything to say for yourself, I am ready to listen. But you had better drop this theatrical stuff."

"It was the stupid Russian fireman that put the mistaken idea in your head?" politely queried the prisoner.

"I see that we shan't get anywhere," was the blunt reply. "You are on the ship's articles as an English citizen, Mendoza. I shall turn you over to the British consulate in Batavia."

This staggered Mendoza. His swarthy skin bleached to a dirty white and his affected composure was stripped from him. It was almost pitiable to see him try to rally before he said:

"You will get yourself in trouble, Captain Sharpe. England protects the rights of her subjects wherever they are."

"His Majesty's Government will be glad to lay hands on you wherever you are," was the retort. "I feel very confident of that much."

The captain beckoned the chief officer and told him:

"Lock this man up and keep him in irons. Send

that Russian fireman back to duty. Tell him he is released on probation. That will scare the soul out of the poor blockhead."

For once Mendoza's glib tongue had been stilled. He was led out of the chart-room without another word. After supper the chief engineer strolled to the bridge. He was smoking a cigar with the air of a man whose burdens had rolled away. He propped his elbows upon the rail and contemplated the red sunset until the captain came along to ask:

"How is the soviet? The vessel is doing better than seven knots, I notice."

"All hands as meek as children after a spanking, Captain Sharpe. Now tell me how you did it."

"It was simple enough. I took time to watch their faces. The Russian gave me the tip. He did n't know he did it, but he could n't keep his eyes away from Mendoza. And so I took a look at Mendoza, and he was different, by Jingo — I caught that at a glance — brains and an air — you know — and I had heard him sing. He was a chap to wind those men around his finger."

"It had n't occurred to me," said the chief, a bit sheepishly.

"No discredit to you," replied the skipper. "I was in a tight fix and it sharpened my wits. I had to find a way out. And the next thing I noticed was that the other men were stealing a look at Mendoza, and afraid they would be caught at it. A nod from him and the whole gang would have jumped at me and you. But he lacked the sand. I had him bluffed."

"Were you able to screw any information out of him?"

"Not a blessed word, but that does n't worry me. Your Kid Briscoe gave me a line on him. Mendoza has been up to something worse than cooking up a mutiny, and when I said I intended to hand him over to the British authorities he fairly crumpled."

"Mixed up in some bomb conspiracy, very likely," observed the chief. "There was a bad explosion in London about a month before we sailed."

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE CHINESE JUNK

AFTER Mendoza had vanished so abruptly from the scene, the *True American* was like another ship. It was as though she had run clear of a belt of poisoned air. The loafers and trouble-makers were on their best behavior, feeling very nervous for fear that Mendoza might have revealed the membership of the soviet which had been neatly nipped in the bud. And there was a feeling of most wholesome respect for young Captain Malcolm Sharpe. They had seen him in action and nobody cared to give him another excuse. The fact that he had declined to punish the Russian fireman, and rightly regarded him as no more than a blundering dupe, aroused a sense of admiration. Fair play and justice are the sailor's gospel.

These simple-minded and ignorant men, whose passions had been so easily aroused, soon forgot their grievances and wondered how they had been persuaded to make fools of themselves. The ship resumed her orderly and monotonous existence as she furrowed the endless reaches of the slumbering Pacific.

Almost a month of the voyage had passed when the chief engineer again found himself in difficulties, but not through any fault of his crew. He disliked

the steamer and had little faith in her. He was a staunch champion of the new merchant marine and was always ready to argue that most of the war-built fleet did credit to the flag. There were dozens of other shipbuilding plants, besides Hog Island, whose steamers were making records to be proud of. But among more than two thousand ocean-going cargo vessels, many of them constructed in great haste, there were bound to be some, here and there, that developed faults. Men who knew nothing about building ships had been given contracts, wherever the artisans and the materials could be assembled. Speed in launching the mighty fleet had been everything.

The *True American* was not so faithful as her name implied. The chief engineer was not at all surprised when the engines had to be stopped and the first assistant reported that "the condenser was finally and totally on the blink." Investigation showed that two or three days might be required to finish the repairs. Meanwhile the ship would stay where she was. The captain took it calmly. He had been dreading some more serious mishap, like dropping a few plates out of the bottom, or losing the propeller.

And so the *True American* rolled gently in the long Pacific swell while the engine-room gang sweated and hammered and called the ship an unsanctified old rattle-trap. On deck the seamen wielded paint-brushes beneath the awnings and yearned to go in swimming. Briscoe was not needed on the condenser

job, and in the afternoon the second assistant sent him up to overhaul the motor-dory which was slung from davits on the upper deck. Captain Sharpe was very particular to keep all the boats in order, ready to put overside at a moment's notice and amply stocked with provisions and water. It was a part of good seamanship.

A handy mechanic was Briscoe, James E., who enjoyed working on an engine of any description. Settling himself in the motor-dory, he leisurely polished and wiped until the brass-work shone like gold. Then he cleaned and oiled the engine and touched up the rusted spots with black paint. When he tried to set it running, he discovered that the big gasoline tank in the bow was empty. This was contrary to orders and he looked for a leak. It was soon discovered that the copper pipe leading from the tank to the engine in the stern had corroded and broken off. Down to the engine-room went Briscoe and returned with a coil of copper pipe, a blow-torch, a soldering-kit, and a five-gallon can of gasoline.

He labored contentedly to make a thorough job of it while Judson Wyman painted the side of the deck-house near by. The breeze was cool and a few white clouds softened the glare of the sun. Briscoe had finished soldering a coupling and was putting it together when he noticed that the two officers on the bridge were aiming their glasses off to starboard. A moment later somebody on deck shouted something about a sail. Judson scurried to the other side of the ship and presently ran back to exclaim:

"Come take a look, Kid. The bridge can't make out what it is. I heard the second mate say he'd be jiggered if he could name it."

They stared and waited as long as they dared leave their work, but the tiny bit of canvas lifted very slowly from the horizon. The officers seemed to be excited about it, and Judson decided to shift his paint-pot nearer the bridge where he might overhear the talk.

"A bark is about all you would expect to meet, with everything set in this light wind," said Captain Sharpe. "But I never saw royals look like that."

"It's more like a ragged palm-leaf fan," observed the second mate. "And dirty brown, at that. It was the dazzle of the sun that made it shine white when we first sighted it."

"Standing this way, Mr. Grayson," said the captain, after gazing through his glasses. "If this breeze holds from the north the vessel will be fairly close aboard before sundown."

"A comical object, sir. We are much too far offshore to run across any of those Malay craft."

"Yes, indeed. They keep close to the islands. And it is too big for any of the South Sea natives to be cruising in."

Briscoe had no intention of going below until the mystery of this strange sail was solved. He found several other puttering jobs in the motor-dory, and then refilled the fresh-water cask and checked up the sealed cans of meat, biscuit, and so on, in the lockers. By way of putting in another hour, he

busied himself with sandpaper and varnish to remove the sea stains and sun blisters, and felt satisfied that the boat was spick-and-span and ready to run at a moment's notice.

By this time the extraordinary sailing vessel had become clearly visible. It was coming down before the wind in a crazy sort of fashion, heading this way and that. Its creeping progress seemed to be little more than a drift. The brown sails fluttered in rags from three stumpy masts. The yards, if you could call them such, were cocked aslant at various angles. The vessel itself was shaped like a half moon, and sat high out of water. The stern was built up into a clumsy and fantastic house gay with carved railings and crimson paint. The clumsy bow was decorated with two huge staring eyes which gave the effect of a novel variety of sea monster.

"A big Chinese junk!" exclaimed Captain Sharpe, "and blown a thousand miles from port, if I can read the signs. Imagine trying to work to wind'ard in that curio, Mr. Grayson. Do you see many people on her?"

"Ten or a dozen lined up on that gilded joss-house of a poop, sir. They are manning that big stick of a tiller. She steers by brute strength."

"Yes, I saw them, but where are the rest of the poor heathen?"

"Some heads are bobbing above the bulwarks, I think. They must be in a bad way."

"No doubt of it. We shall have to give them help. They can never get anywhere."

The crew of the *True American* watched the crippled junk drift nearer until the sun sank low and violet shadows crept across the deck. Then the breeze died with the sun and the junk floated almost motionless as a sea picture tragic and bizarre. The *True American* rolled languidly with engines stilled and the distance between them was something more than a mile. There was no need for the junk to make signals of distress. The sight of her was eloquent enough.

"They are not sending off any boats," said Captain Sharpe. "Lost them, I presume. Well, we can't wait until morning and perhaps lose the junk in the night. It would be inhuman. I could n't sleep. Clear away the motor-dory, Mr. Grayson. You will go in charge."

"Yes, sir. Briscoe will run the engine. Shall I take some extra men?"

"A couple ought to be enough. Wyman is a dependable boy, for one. Look things over and come back and report. If we have to take those Chinamen off to-night, we can use one of the big lifeboats and tow it. Better carry them some stores and fresh water, anyhow. They may be in a state of famine."

"More than likely, sir. If the junk is seaworthy, perhaps we can pass a hawser and let the steamer tow it until we sight land. That would be pleasanter than crowding those poor devils aboard here. You know what they are."

"Wait and see, Mr. Grayson. Be careful, now. Men mad with hunger or thirst can't be reasoned

with. Better take your pistol, and be sure to keep your boat clear of the junk."

The big motor-dory was quickly swung out, with two extra water casks, and several boxes of beef and biscuit stowed under the seats. Mr. Grayson was about to tell the men to lower away when the boatswain came running up to say:

"This Mendoza, the crook you've got locked up, wants me to tell the captain that he can talk Chinese. He can sling the Canton dialect, so he claims."

Overhearing this interesting statement, Captain Sharpe hesitated for a moment before he exclaimed:

"Take him along, Mr. Grayson. An interpreter will be worth a lot to you. You can't make head or tail of the mess without him."

"Shall I keep the irons on him, sir?"

"No, put them in your pocket. It will be safe enough. He can't possibly get away from you. And I don't believe in parading a handcuffed white man before a flock of Chinese."

A question was solved which had puzzled the captain's mind. He had observed the hint of a slant in the set of Mendoza's black eyes, and had fancied that there was a faint tinge of yellow in the swarthy skin. And yet these signs were contradicted by the curling hair, the straight nose, the animated gestures. The existence of this mysterious and sinister half-caste had begun in some port of the Far East. When he was fetched up and ordered into the motor-boat dory, he had a smile and

a courteous greeting for the captain. There was no reply, and he took a seat in the boat with the air of a lord who was being carried to his yacht.

The dory slapped into the water and left a silver streak in its wake as it moved away from the side of the ship. The tattered and sea-worn junk rapidly loomed larger in the lustrous twilight. Mendoza stared at it in silence, with a certain Chinese stolidity which seemed to have changed him unawares. He was unlike the gay troubadour who had sung sea ballads on the deck of the *True American*. His fluent tongue was still. His emotions were masked. At length he asked a question or two of Mr. Grayson and his voice had a peculiar quality. It was shriller, with a disagreeable harshness.

As the junk became nearer, they saw that her decks were in commotion. Half-naked figures in flapping blue breeches popped out of a rude shelter of matting amidships. The ponderous timber that served as a tiller was deserted. The crew swarmed upon the massive bulwarks or wriggled between the supports of the carved and gilded railing of the poop that they might behold the approaching motor-boat. They stretched out their arms in frantic appeal, and from the junk there came a monotonous wailing sound. It was a dreadful thing to hear, this high-pitched and unending chorus which seemed to consist of one word repeated over and over and over again.

"*Ding-shui — ding-shui — ding-shui — ding-shui!*"

"What ails them, Mendoza?" demanded Mr.

Grayson. "Hanged if that racket don't bore clean through my head."

"*Water*. And they look as though they needed it," was the reply.

The boat slowed its headway and turned to approach a ladder of rope and bamboo which dangled from the waist of the junk. The Chinese sailors crowded to this spot, fighting with what strength they had to get closer to the boat. It was a mob of skeletons, of faces that were like parchment stretched tightly over the bones of the skull. Their black hair was matted and unkempt. They clawed each other and those who fell were trampled under foot. It was not at all a pretty scene. Mendoza shouted something in their own language, but the only response was the piercing clamor of "*ding-shui, ding-shui*."

Judson Wyman was in the bow of the dory, ready to fend off with a boat-hook, when Mr. Grayson called out sharply:

"Hey, there, Briscoe, back her away. Those Chinks will be jumping into the boat. This *is* a kettle of fish! For the Lord's sake, Mendoza, make 'em shut up that infernal caterwauling."

"I am trying to find out where their captain is, sir, but I can't make them listen to anything."

Just then the noise seemed to slacken and the motions of the frenzied sufferers were less violent. Mendoza noticed that they were looking away from the boat, toward the high poop of the junk. Then there came striding into the waist a colossal and dignified figure of a man clad in a robe of blue silk.

On his head was a round black cap with a red button. His heavy features were calm and strong. The misfortunes and horrors of this strange voyage seemed to have touched him not at all. With stride unchecked he surged into the mob and parted it, knocking men right and left. They tried to flee from his path or cowered where they were jammed together. He spoke in a great voice that rumbled from his throat and the wailing was almost hushed. Stumbling over something near the bulwark, he stooped and picked up the body of a sailor who had been trampled to death. With scarcely an effort he flung it over the bulwark and it whirled heels over head to splash into the sea.

Gazing down at the boat he waved his hand with a slow gesture which seemed to embrace the hapless junk and her dying people, to tell a story without words. Then he folded his arms across his broad chest and gravely bowed in token of his gratitude. Mendoza shouted up to him and a flicker of surprise crossed the impassive face. He answered rapidly, in booming gutturals. Mendoza fired questions at him until it was possible to explain to Mr. Grayson:

"He is Captain Ah Fong-su. The junk is called the *Blossoms of the Heavenly Gardens*."

"A rank bed of posies, I call it," growled the second officer. "How did he get caught in this unholy fix?"

"He sailed from Canton for Formosa with a cargo of rice. That was more than two months ago. The junk was disabled in a typhoon, sails blown to rags

and a lot of gear carried away, and she was blown out into the open ocean. Prevailing northerly winds set her down here. Captain Ah Fong-su apologizes for the conduct of his men. They are very hungry, he says, and there have been no showers for almost a week to give them a little rainwater to drink."

"Ask him how many are left aboard, Mendoza."

"About forty, sir. There were eighty-six in the crew when he sailed from Canton. Some were washed overboard, but a lot have died within the last fortnight. Thirst and starvation. Salt water spoiled a great deal of the rice. The captain has been serving out what was left, a pinch or so a day. Only the strongest of the men were able to survive on it."

"Where are his officers?"

"The men murdered two of his mates. He appears to be running things pretty much by himself."

"Aye, Mendoza, he is that kind. Give him my compliments, and tell him he is a buster of a man. Now what about getting this grub and water aboard the junk? It is up to Captain Ah Fong-su to dish it out to those coyotes of his. I don't fancy the job myself."

"He will rig a block-and-fall and hoist it in."

The boat moved nearer the scarred and weedy side of the junk. Judson Wyman and the other seaman rigged a sling around a cask and it climbed to the deck with a tottering line of Chinese sailors tugging and yelping on the other end of the rope. Captain Ah Fong-su drew a short, heavy bludgeon

from inside his silken robe and drove his men back as they made a rush for the cask. He smote them without mercy. When he hit a head, it cracked. And those who felt the might of his gigantic blows were not even kicking when they fell to the deck. He proposed to save their lives if he had to kill them.

Another cask was safely hoisted, and then the boat had to wait. There was no denying these gasping wretches a drink of water. Captain Ah Fong-su bellowed at them, and they groped about until most of them had earthenware cups in their hands. Majestically he clubbed them into a sort of line which squirmed and broke and was re-formed. Standing beside the spigot of a cask, he doled out to every man a cup of water and no more. If there were quavering prayers for more, he used the bludgeon to keep the column moving.

"Would you believe it if you had n't seen it?" exclaimed the admiring Mr. Grayson. "I thought our skipper could play it lone-handed, but this seven-foot Chinaman is the original lion-tamer."

"I once saw a Chinese pirate who looked very much like this Captain Ah Fong-su," said Mendoza.

"If I thought there were a few pirates like him afloat, you'd never catch me at sea again."

The night was closing down and the sky had become so dusky that the men in the boat were working by the light of an electric torch. On the deck of the junk a flare was kindled of bits of tarred wood upon a piece of iron plate. Mr. Grayson noticed that a bank of clouds was climbing out of the sea off beyond

the *True American*. They had a black, threatening look as though there might be a squall of wind in them. This errand of mercy was taking more time than he had reckoned. The steamer was no longer visible, but her masthead light gleamed like a star. Uneasily he urged the men to move lively, and the boxes of stores were being lifted out when one of them dropped into the dory with a crash. Two or three of the famished Chinese had eluded Captain Ah Fong-su, and as the box of biscuit slid over the bulwark they dived to clutch it. In the mêlée the box was pushed out of its sling and another wild scrimmage knocked it over the side.

A wrathful outburst from "Kid" Briscoe caused the second officer to inquire:

"Where did it land? Hurt you, did it?"

"Missed me, but lit square on top of the engine, worse luck. I heard something break. Pass me that electric lamp."

After a hasty examination he announced·

"Smashed the porcelains in both spark-plugs and knocked off a pet-cock. I'll have to rummage in the locker for tools and spare parts. Guess I can make her pop somehow."

The last case of provisions was transferred while the peevish Briscoe twisted out the damaged plugs and searched for new ones. The pet-cock caused him more trouble. This delay was worse than annoying. Thunder was muttering in the black clouds which had raced far up the sky and flashes of lightning played among them. There were all the warn-

ings of a sudden and furious squall. Captain Malcolm Sharpe let them know that he was getting anxious. The whistle of the *True American* sounded several sharp blasts as a signal of recall.

"Here, buddy," Briscoe sang out to Judson. "Take this bug-light and use it as a blinker. You learned the Morse code at Camp Stuart."

Judson aimed the electric torch at the distant steamer and carefully snapped out the dot-and-dash letters:

*"D–I–S–A–B–L–E–D R–E–T–U–R–N S–O–O–N"*

In response came the word, in long and short blasts of the steamer's whistle:

*"H–U–R–R–Y"*

"The skipper sees that squall," said Mr. Grayson, "and I'll bet he is fidgeting on the bridge."

"Will he send a boat after us?" asked Judson.

"I don't think so. Those big lifeboats are too awkward to handle in a squall with the kind of men he's got. He will wait unless we holler for help."

A few minutes more and the engine kicked over, sputtered, and stalled. Briscoe said things to it and discovered a broken wire. When, at last, he got the dory under way, the stars were blotted out overhead and the lightning danced in blinding splendor. There was a spatter of warm rain, then a tremendous downpour, and they could hear the wind come sweeping across the inky sea. The dory was almost drowned in foam and spray as it stubbornly fought to win its way toward the steamer. The masthead

light had vanished, but soon a red rocket soared high and then another.

"We can't go ahead in the teeth of a wind like this," shouted Mr. Grayson. "It's like butting into a stone wall. The sea is flattened out for the moment, but it will begin to run presently. And we'll swamp as sure as guns."

He let the dory drive into it a little longer. Then she rammed her bow into a seething roller which broke over the coaming and washed along the floor. Mr. Grayson had learned to know the sea in the coastwise schooner trade and in fishermen's dories on the Grand Banks. He was no ready-made steamboatman, as he was sometimes heard to declare. Therefore, when he said they were likely to swamp, it was the opinion of an expert. Glancing over his shoulder, he noted that they were still quite near the junk. He could not discern the high and clumsy hull or the tattered sails, but a tiny glow showed in one of her windows. Reluctantly he exclaimed:

"It's any port in a storm, boys. We'll have to put back and chum with Captain Ah Fong-su until this squall frisks past us."

Surging before the wind, the motor-dory ran under the lee of the junk which was drifting almost broadside on. Their shouts and the flash of the torch attracted the notice of the Chinese sailors. Food and water had wonderfully revived these hardy castaways. They dropped the braces at which they had been hauling with some wild idea of trying to heave the vessel to, and pattered aft to yell for

Captain Ah Fong-su. That herculean mariner had already seen the boat and his voice resounded above the screaming of the wind. Mendoza shrieked something in response, and interpreted to Mr. Grayson:

"We had better go aboard before the sea gets any worse. They will hook onto the boat and we can help them hoist her. The captain says the boat will be stove up if we leave her at the end of a painter."

"It surely will," agreed Mr. Grayson, "if that lubberly junk goes waltzing off before the wind. Not but what I'd choose some other hotel if I had my choice."

"We may be snug abed in the *True American* before midnight," said Briscoe. "Seeing life, eh, Jud? The *Liberty Chimes* was never like this."

It was ticklish work to jump for the swaying ladder and to keep the boat from being smashed, but they managed it deftly. The Chinese captain knew his business thoroughly, and the boat was safely lifted to hang from the clumsy wooden davits. The visitors expected to find filth and dead men and other unpleasant things. The smells were enough to knock them down, for a junk whose cargo has been rice, mostly spoiled, is not apt to resemble a perfumery shop. But they had never been so taken aback in their lives as when they entered the large cabin in the towering after house.

The captain's quarters ran the width of the vessel. The room was clean and in perfect order;

this was the first thing noticed. Outside of a museum, the American sailors had never seen embroidered wall hangings so gorgeous. There were chests and tables and intricately carved chairs of teakwood and ebony and lacquer. In a corner was an altar upon which was seated the grotesque figure of a Chinese god under a canopy of crimson streamers, and before it were cups of rice and water. Captain Ah Fong-su belonged in such a dignified and stately room as this. His hands in his flowing sleeves, he begged them to forgive the lack of more suitable hospitality. He was anxious to have them know that he had fared no better than his men. They had wasted the food and water during the voyage, like the witless swine that they were, while he had sparingly rationed himself day by day. It was Confucius, he reminded them, who had written that no man was virtuous and worthy of the regard of the ancestral spirits until he had learned self-restraint.

Mendoza turned his words into English with unfaltering ease and a curious suggestion of the Chinese flavor. The captain had delayed to put on his silk robes when the boat was seen coming from the steamer, he explained, in order to welcome his saviors in a becoming manner. The contrast between this scene and the deck of the junk as viewed in the twilight was fantastic. Judson Wyman and James Briscoe were hugely interested in the masterful Captain Ah Fong-su. They forgot the sea and wind which rocked the junk and made her timbers

groan. Mr. Grayson, however, was as restless as a cat. After several trips on deck he announced:

"It's one wicked squall after another, boys. And blacker than Tophet! And this crazy junk is sky-hooting off to leeward like a shanty in a spring freshet. We'll be in luck if we find that steamer."

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE DEVILS AND THE DEEP SEA

LONG before midnight, Mr. Grayson had given up hope of trying to find the *True American* until morning. He and his boat's crew were the unwilling guests of Captain Ah Fong-su in the helpless junk *Blossoms of the Heavenly Gardens*. It was not Mr. Grayson's habit to mope or lose heart when things went wrong. His earlier years in sailing vessels had been hard and adventurous and he, too, had known the torments of hunger and thirst when adrift in open boats. Nothing surprised him very much at sea. If a man wanted it soft and easy, he ought to stay ashore. In this instance he faced the facts without flinching and proceeded to organize himself accordingly.

The steamer would be unable to finish the repairs to her condenser and get under way inside of another twenty-four hours. By daylight the junk would have drifted many miles to the southward of her. Mr. Grayson remembered the steamer's position at noon when he had worked out the longitude and latitude, but he had not even a sextant in the motor-dory. To set out in the boat in search of the steamer with only a compass for guidance would be to risk missing the mark. And to wander about the Pacific, perhaps for weeks, in the motor-dory

was not a pleasant prospect. This was the smallest and least seaworthy of the steamer's boats, carried more for the captain's convenience in port than anything else.

The thought of being marooned aboard this pest-house of a junk could not make Mr. Grayson feel happy, but in other hours of trial he had consoled himself with the doctrine:

"Something is pretty sure to turn up. If it don't, something else will."

He called his men together and told them:

"You'll get little sleep to-night. Fetch the boat's stores and water into this cabin. The boat lockers are n't safe, even if they are padlocked. Wyman will stay in here. Briscoe takes the deck watch with me. You are in custody, Mendoza. If you want to make yourself handy, it may count in your favor. No tricks, mind you, for I won't be at all backward about blowing your brains out."

The other seaman was a well-built, cheerful American lad named Jones, who seemed to take this queer experience as a matter of course. Mr. Grayson preferred to let him stay within call, for whatever need might arise. When the precious water and provisions from the boat were brought in, Captain Ah Fong-su locked them in a smaller room behind a nail-studded door of teakwood plank. He shouted an order and a bronzed, gray-headed boatswain squatted outside the door, a cutlass across his knees. Then the Chinese captain doffed his silk robe and put on a quilted coat before he went on deck

with the vigilant Mr. Grayson. Mendoza stretched himself upon a couch and went to sleep.

At sunrise the sky was clear, a glorious morning with a wind that blew strong and steady out of the north. The blue sea blossomed in foam. The brown ribbons of sail fluttered and snapped among the broken battens and frayed cordage of the stumpy masts. Mr. Grayson rubbed his sleepy eyes and said to the faithful Briscoe:

"Not a sign of a steamer. I guess we're elected. You'd burn up all your gasoline trying to shove the dory against this whooping breeze. Captain Sharpe won't lose much time in looking for us. He can't afford to. His first duty is to the ship."

"No doubt about that, sir. What we've got to figure is how long we can make the stores and water last. These forty Chinks are quiet just now, but as soon as they've used up that stuff we brought 'em from the ship, look out for big trouble."

"Water will be the problem," reflected Mr. Grayson. "We may be knocking about for a long while. This Chinese skipper is a wonderful man, but they may slip a knife into him any time. A disaster like this will turn men into beasts. You know what shipwreck has done to good crews of white men. They have eaten each other for food — well, we'll forget that stuff."

Mr. Grayson called his men together in the cabin and gave them breakfast from their own stores. Then he consulted Captain Ah Fong-su and learned that the Chinese sailors would be rationed on a pint

of water a day. This was enough to keep them alive. As for food, a ship's biscuit, a spoonful of rice, and a scrap of canned meat would be given them twice daily. They had caught some rainwater during the night, but most of it had leaked from the sun-dried barrel. While Mr. Grayson talked, he pulled the automatic pistol from his pocket and carefully wiped it with a piece of silk. The Chinese captain looked at the weapon and actually smiled.

"You get me," said the American officer. "You stand by me and I won't lay down on you. Tell him that we are in the same boat, Mendoza, to sink or swim together."

Shortly after this, Judson Wyman and Briscoe found a chance to sit down by themselves.

"Before you turn in for a nap, Jud, here is how it shapes up to me. We can stave off a riot for a week or so. Then if their water gives out and we still have some of our own in the cabin, good-night. These Chinamen did n't try to rush their skipper because they knew he was no better off than they were."

"We may all be out of water, Kid, if this junk floats as long as some of the derelicts I have heard of."

"It's a pint a day allowance for us, too. That ten-gallon cask we took out of the motor-boat is a mighty small supply."

They realized what a scanty supply of water meant before this first day had passed. A pint was only two glasses, less than Judson had gulped down

when he came home from supper after a football practice. He could not remember real hunger or thirst in all his life. A ship's biscuit seemed no more than a morsel. He had always taken three square meals a day as much for granted as the sun and the rain. He tightened his belt and tried to forget the parched throat and resolved to bear it grimly. This was the chance to show his sand.

The Chinese sailors appeared to think they were suffering no hardship at all on this pinching allowance. They were the survival of the fittest, incredibly toughened and enduring, sinewy skeletons in whom the spark of life still strongly burned. They came of a race which is always on the ragged edge of famine, which seldom knows what it is to have enough to eat. Captain Ah Fong-su had set them at work. It was uncanny to see them active, like corpses snatched from the grave. One group was patching fragments of canvas together in the endeavor to make some sort of a mainsail that would hold the wind. Others were splicing halliards or trying to untangle the amazing confusion of the running rigging. A dozen of them slowly swayed up and down at the long wooden beams which moved a primitive pump, and a small stream of water gushed from the hold of the junk. The battered craft was surprisingly tight. It was safeguarded by bulkheads which Chinese shipwrights had invented a thousand years before the white race had thought of watertight compartments.

Judson Wyman was ordered to stand watch and watch with the young seaman Jones in keeping an eye on the slippery Mendoza. It may have seemed a needless precaution, but Mr. Grayson regarded him as a dangerous criminal who had been entrusted to his safe-keeping and he proposed to deliver him to Captain Malcolm Sharpe of the *True American* some day and somewhere.

It appeared almost ungentlemanly, for Mendoza was tireless in his efforts to be of service. Uncomplaining, entertaining, he helped in a thousand and one ways to make the involuntary voyage in the junk less irksome. Now and then he hummed little snatches of song, but the words were Chinese, set to plaintive airs in minor keys which had no melody at all. He would break off and begin again, as though trying to remember.

Curious to know what they meant, Judson asked him for a sample translation.

"That one? It is called *The Flute of Chang Liang*," amiably answered Mendoza. "Chinese soldiers have sung it in camp for many centuries. You would call it a folk-song, I fancy. There are dozens of verses, but I forget most of them. Chang Liang carried his flute to war with him and used to tootle it so wonderfully that the whole regiment lay awake to listen. Very foolish of them. The colonel should have suppressed Chang Liang as a nuisance. At any rate, he stirred their emotions tremendously, and the song tells about their dreams of home. One verse goes like this:

"In fancy those notes to their childhood's days brought them,
To those far-away scenes they had not seen for years:
To those who had loved them and reared them, and taught them,
And the eyes of those stern men were wetted with tears."

"Why, it sounds as if the Chinese were just like other folks," exclaimed Judson, as though he had made an important discovery. "I have been feeling darned homesick myself."

"The Chinese are a most admirable people, as long as they remain Chinese," was the strange comment of Mendoza.

It was a day or so after this that Judson made note of something else. At first it seemed as innocent as Mendoza's trick of humming Chinese songs. He talked a great deal with Captain Ah Fong-su, and was no longer careful to interpret what was said between them. For hours at a time they sat together in a corner of the gorgeous cabin or walked to and fro, and it was Mendoza's voice that carried the burden of the argument. The captain rumbled a remark or listened in a massive and inscrutable silence, now and again breaking into exclamation with harsh vehemence. To Judson the Chinese language was merely a string of curious noises. On board of the *True American* he might have caught glimpses of Mendoza's emotions, even at a distance, merely by watching the play of his features and the vivid gestures, but now he veiled himself behind a composure that was essentially Chinese.

Judson looked and listened for lack of anything better to do. This sentry duty was a tedious business,

and his empty stomach gnawed and his dry tongue was always craving water. And so to forget his wretched discomfort he diverted himself by guessing and wondering what Mendoza was eternally jabbering about to Captain Ah Fong-su. After several days of it, Judson found that he had become interested in the problem. Mendoza was losing that stolid manner, for one thing. His nerves were twitching, and he betrayed his feelings quite often. It was possible to read impatience, anxiety, and fear. In his voice was a pleading note that could not be concealed. Captain Ah Fong-su was the same grave and courteous listener, seated like a great statue of Buddha, revealing neither weariness nor annoyance.

To Judson it became as absorbing as a puzzle when one almost grasps a tantalizing clue. The matter was too fanciful to be mentioned to Mr. Grayson. In fact there was nothing tangible enough to discuss. Judson had one of those dogged persistent minds that hates to let go once it has taken hold. He hung to an idea like a terrier to a root. Briscoe's quicker brain would have tired of this shadowy problem as soon as it baffled him. Gradually Judson framed one conclusion. Mendoza was using every ounce of his adroit and cunning eloquence, of his power to charm and persuade, and he was desperately in earnest. Now that the strain had begun to break him, he was like a man fighting for his life.

To separate these two men, reflected Judson, by

locking Mendoza in another room, might be a perilous blunder. There was no way of knowing the hidden thoughts of Captain Ah Fong-su. To anger him meant certain destruction to the four Americans. It was for him to say whether they should live or die. Painfully and bit by bit Judson pieced together one theory after another and discarded all but one of them.

"Mendoza is still trying to persuade this big Chinese skipper to do one certain thing," the lad's mind ran on, "and if ever a man was sweating his soul out, it is this scamp of a Mendoza. There is only one thing in the world he cares a hang about, and that is his own precious skin. The only way he can save it is to get rid of us. He knows that Mr. Grayson will never let go of him. Getting rid of us! Gee, but that does sound unpleasant! I wish I knew what Captain Ah Fong-su thought about it."

While Judson, on guard in the cabin, was milling this problem over, the captain of the junk came in from a passageway of the huge deck-house that towered aft. For once his majestic dignity was ruffled. He was not so much angry as shocked and frightened. He looked as if he had received a visit from the ghosts of his ancestors. Ignoring Mendoza, he shouted to Mr. Grayson, who came racing in from the quarterdeck, Briscoe at his heels. With a gesture Captain Ah Fong-su bade them follow him into the strong-walled room where all the water and provisions had been stored under lock and key.

The two water kegs which had been sent from the steamer to succor the suffering Chinese crew were lashed against the outer wall of the room. The smaller keg, taken from the motor-dory for the use of Mr. Grayson and his comrades, stood in a niche of the inside wall between two closets.

Captain Ah Fong-su stooped over his two kegs and turned the spigots. No trickle of water came from either of them. Both kegs had been drained almost to the last drop. There was no need of an interpreter to explain what this situation meant. Mr. Grayson stood aghast. He knew that one of the kegs should have been almost full of water, according to the daily allowance so carefully doled out to the Chinese sailors. Anxiously he turned to his own water keg, rolled it on its side, and pried out the bung stopper. Hasty measurement showed that there was as much water left as he had expected to find. This keg had not been drained. He looked keenly at Captain Ah Fong-su to discover whether he suspected the American sailors of tapping the other two kegs, but there was nothing in the manner of the Chinese mariner to suggest that he held any such theory. In fact, he summoned Mendoza from the cabin and told him to assure the guests that their honor was taken for granted.

With an odd impulse, which seemed to have no meaning at all, Captain Ah Fong-su untied the lashings that held the empty kegs against the outer wall of the room and rolled them over with his foot. In a stave of each keg, very close to the bottom

hoop, was found a small round hole neatly bored. And in a plank of the wall was another round hole near the floor. Now that the kegs were removed, the sunlight out on deck shot tiny yellow shafts through these two holes in the wall. Captain Ah Fong-su swore frightfully in Chinese and strode on deck, the others following him. Against the house was piled a huge hempen hawser, rotted and frayed and chafed. Some of the layers rested upon the oaken bitts or timbers used for mooring the junk.

The Chinese captain squatted and peered under the heaped-up hawser. Again his language sounded like the explosion of a thousand packs of fire-crackers. There was a small space, completely hidden, into which a scrawny and limber man might have wriggled. Mr. Grayson and the others helped to heave part of the hawser aside. One of them picked up a slender bamboo tube and a long plug, carefully rounded and smoothed. At a casual glance, the plug fitted the hole bored in each water keg.

"Those thirsty devils for'ard were too slick for Captain Ah Fong-su that time," said Mr. Grayson. "The Chinks who helped stow the kegs in the room remembered exactly where they were placed. Sucked 'em dry with a bit of bamboo tube, squirmed under that hawser at night like billy-be-damned eels."

"And you can bet that the lads who had this private pipe-line kept it dark from the rest of the crew," exclaimed Briscoe. "When the skipper fails to hand

out the half-pint allowance at sundown, there will be a ruction."

"It looks like stormy times," agreed Mr. Grayson, "though I never was a hand to borrow trouble. What worries me is that those wild Chinamen know that *we* still have a keg of water. They saw us fetch it in from the motor-dory. If there was any way of getting away in our boat, I'd be glad to say good-bye. But the gang of lunatics would n't let us, unless we left our stores and water behind us."

"Is there any chance of keeping them out of this end of the junk, if they really break loose?" inquired Judson, who swallowed a lump in his throat.

"One pistol among us and no extra cartridges. Captain Ah Fong-su has a revolver, a young cannon of a forty-five. But if these Chinese sailors once start coming, my boy, potting a few won't stop the rest. It's ridiculous how cheap they hold human life. The skipper can't knock 'em around with a club if they once come after that water of ours. I used to think the yellow peril was exaggerated, but I don't now."

Captain Ah Fong-su, keeping his fears to himself, agreed that it was a proper precaution to arm themselves as well as they could. Dull cutlasses, however, were not enough to inspire confidence. There were four Americans and Captain Ah Fong-su and his elderly, wrinkled boatswain against forty frenzied sailors who regarded death as a mere incident. The afternoon passed quietly while the few

anxious men on the lofty quarterdeck scanned the sea in vain for the sight of a sail.

When the hour came for serving out the rations and water, Captain Ah Fong-su advanced to the forward end of the raised deck and took his stand as usual, the "young cannon" of a revolver in his hand, while the faithful boatswain dealt to each sailor a large spoonful of rice, a scrap of canned meat, and a square of hardtack. But when they held up their cups, with eager, husky clamor, the captain told them that there was no more water. There were vile dogs among them who had stolen it, said he, stolen the share of their comrades. A little patience, and the gods would send them rain from the skies.

There was no immediate uproar. The habit of servile obedience to the words of this huge master was a bond not so quickly broken. Some shrill cries of rage there were, but these were almost drowned in the wail of "*ding-shui, ding-shui.*" They hung about in groups, gobbling down their food, or crept away in fear lest the stronger might snatch the morsels from them. One burly man, athletic even though wasted by famine, stood and yelled abuse at the captain who ordered him to depart. The fellow was beside himself. He climbed the wooden staircase and clung to the railing like a monkey, still screaming filthy insults. Captain Ah Fong-su calmly shot him through the head and he rolled to the deck below. Very little attention was paid to him. Until dark the body lay there, sprawled as it had fallen.

Mr. Grayson was on deck bright and early next morning, still convinced that something would turn up. The Chinese captain joined him, and Mendoza was told to come out of the cabin, in case of need. Judson was close by, and Briscoe had finished his watch, but none of them thought of sleep. The crisis was believed to be at hand.

Mr. Grayson walked along the roof of the house to the break of the poop, as it is called, and gazed down at the main deck below him where the Chinese sailors had begun to drift aft to wait for food. It was a drop of seven or eight feet, and like a canny and resourceful sailorman, Mr. Grayson studied the one stairway that led up to his position and wondered how long it could be defended. Then he surveyed the crowd below him and thought they were surprisingly well-behaved. It was the lull before the storm, as he viewed the matter.

Just then several of the Chinese became entangled in a furious fight among themselves. Presently one of them was knocked down and stunned and two others jumped upon him. They were trying to gouge out his eyes, as Mr. Grayson hastily concluded. Manly indignation got the better of his judgment. It was a sickening spectacle, this deliberate maiming of a helpless man. Snatching up a cutlass, the plucky Mr. Grayson jumped down the stairway, intending to pull the victim out of his plight and give him a chance for his life. No other Chinese were within several yards of the affray. As Mr. Grayson reckoned it, he could knock the rascals

over with the flat of the cutlass, and leap back up the stairway, all in a jiffy.

No sooner had he alighted on the main deck, however, than the victim bounded to his feet, his assailants whirled about, and the three of them ran straight at the foreign devil officer. It was the signal for six or eight others to rush with the same purpose. They had been ready and waiting for their cue. They fairly buried poor Mr. Grayson before he knew what had happened to him. His friends on the deck above him were unable to see the tragedy, for the moment, and his yells for help were smothered. In a closely packed mob the Chinese surged forward, clutching their captive by the arms and legs. He was no more than a perfectly helpless bundle. Something had, indeed, turned up for Mr. Grayson, but, alas, it was he himself that was turned up.

It was Briscoe who happened to be looking toward the bow of the junk when he caught a glimpse of the struggling second officer in a confused group of sailors who were lugging him bodily in the direction of the forecastle. Briscoe would have charged to the rescue, regardless of consequences, but Captain Ah Fong-su barred the way as he thundered, Mendoza interpreting: "Wait! They will kill the officer if we interfere. It is a trick and they will have something to say to us."

There was not long to wait. Soon after the unfortunate Mr. Grayson had vanished behind the stout door of the forecastle, one of the Chinese sailors returned as far as the waist of the junk, and

began to shout a rapid and excited harangue. He was evidently a spokesman for the crew. Captain Ah Fong-su stood with folded arms, listening to the message, and Mendoza carried on a running comment in English.

"They say that they know we have water in the cabin. Unless we give it to them, they will kill the white officer who is imprisoned in the forecastle. They will keep him alive until noon. Then, if we do not send them the keg of water, they will put Mr. Grayson to death."

Captain Ah Fong-su uttered an angry exclamation, and Mendoza said, with a shrug:

"It will be a very hard death to die. They will slice him with their knives, a little at a time. In China the executioners call it the *ling chih*."

"Give them the water and let's get Mr. Grayson out of there," cried Judson Wyman, a sob in his voice. "Then we can shove off in the motor-dory and take the Chinese skipper with us. I'd rather take my chance of dying of thirst than to stay aboard with those yellow devils."

Before any one replied to this, Mendoza offered what sounded like an heroic suggestion.

"Let me go forward and talk to these sailors. Most of them think we stole their supply of water. I know their lingo and I am a flowery orator when I have to be. You can often talk them around. If they lock me up with poor Grayson — well, I'll stand the gaff. And perhaps you won't call me such a rotter, after all."

It was a speech that seemed to ring true, every word of it, and with a nod of farewell Mendoza walked along the passage between the house and the tall bulwark. He moved rapidly, agile in spite of privations, while Judson Wyman gazed at him for no more than an instant before he knew, with absolute certainty, what Mendoza was about to do. All the weary hours of reflection in the cabin came to a focus in one clear flash of vision. Mendoza was playing his last card. He had almost reached the stairway to the deck below, when Judson yelled:

"Get him, Briscoe! He means to lead the crew against us and wipe us out. Jump after him, for God's sake!"

Briscoe happened to be the man nearest Mendoza. He went after him like a sprinter bounding from the mark. Mendoza glanced over his shoulder and hesitated for an instant at the top of the steep stairway. Apparently he dared not risk jumping to the deck below. It was like pitching off the roof of a house. He delayed to race down the stairs. Briscoe, a few feet behind him, made not the slightest pause. He alighted upon the smooth wooden railing of the staircase in a flying leap and fairly spun down to the deck. It was like the whiz of a toboggan. He alighted fairly on top of the fleeing Mendoza, who was flattened out by the terrific impact. Judson, Captain Ah Fong-su, and young Seaman Jones came clattering down the stairs at full speed. The Chinese sailors were still huddled in front of the forecastle, at the other end of the junk. There was no difficulty

in dragging Mendoza back to the poop where he could do no mischief.

And now Captain Ah Fong-su took charge of the destiny of Mendoza, who had shamed both his Chinese ancestors and the European blood that was in his veins. The captain motioned the Americans into the cabin. It was a command. Another gesture, and they seated themselves like spectators at some somber and important ceremony. On the walls hung the long crimson panels on which were embroidered great dragons in black-and-gold which seemed to writhe as the silken fabrics moved to the breath of the light breeze that drew through the open windows. Captain Ah Fong-su took his seat in a massive chair, and at the word Mendoza stood facing him.

There was no need of explanation, nor was it for the American seafarers to interfere. Judson knew that the captain of the junk had also read the mind of Mendoza. This cabin was a hall of justice. They heard Mendoza pleading for his life, fluent and plausible as ever, and they watched the grim, unmoved face of the judge. The proceedings were brief. Captain Ah Fong-su spoke a few words, and they resounded through the cabin, heavy and slow, like the tolling of a bell. Mendoza became silent and stood drooping, with bowed head, his hands clasped in front of him.

The long-barreled, heavy revolver appeared in the hand of Captain Ah Fong-su as though by a magician's feat. The explosion was deafening and

the cabin reeked with powder smoke. Mendoza fell quite gently, taking an uncertain step or two before he dropped to his knees and then stretched his slim body on the floor, his head resting upon his arm. Death had been mercifully quick. As he lay there, the expression of his swarthy and intelligent features suggested profound amazement.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A STARTLING RESCUE

THE death of Mendoza, although he deserved this bitter penalty, came as a stunning shock to his shipmates. The episode was unreal. It was the climax of the nightmare which they had lived in this drifting Chinese junk. They crowded out of the silent cabin, with its mingled smell of incense and powder smoke, away from the brooding figure of Captain Ah Fong-su in the great carved chair and the body of Mendoza prone and relaxed, his head resting upon his outflung arm. For the time it was almost forgotten that at the other end of the vessel Mr. Grayson waited in the hope of rescue and that there seemed no way out of a tragic and fatal dilemma. He would die by slow torture unless they gave the priceless supply of water in exchange for him. And without water they were probably doomed to perish together.

Captain Ah Fong-su soon joined them on deck, but he signified that the cruel problem was none of his affair. In this he was right. He was ready to fight in a forlorn hope, to offer his own life for the salvation of his guests, but he could only stand by while they made their choice. The burden of responsibility weighed down upon them. Impetuously Judson Wyman cried:

"My mind is made up. How about it, Briscoe, James E.? And what do you say, Jonesy? We can't bust into that fort of a fo'castle. And the Chinks would eat us up before we got that far. Let them have the water keg."

"We'd be poor pups if we did n't," said Seaman Jones. "We'll save Mr. Grayson and finish in style."

Briscoe made no reply. He had not even heard what was said. Judson gazed at him reproachfully. Thirst was a fearful thing to suffer, as they already knew, but it could n't be that his hard-boiled buddy was weakening. Then Briscoe looked up with a dazed kind of grin, as though aroused from a nap, and murmured:

"Solid ivory above the ears! Ossified from the neck up! Half-witted and allowed to roam at large! That's me, only more so!"

He was delirious, poor fellow, and no wonder, thought Judson, who had begun to feel rather flighty himself. Thirst and short rations were making him gaunt and irritable and sleepless. Impatiently he replied to Briscoe:

"Quit that chattering to yourself. It's a bad habit to start."

"But I *am* the village idiot," persisted Briscoe.

"All right, you are. And this junk is the county asylum. You can't get me to argue that with you."

"Listen, Jud," earnestly implored his comrade. "Do you remember the yarn that Spencer Torrance told us, good old Torrance, the high-brow super-

cargo of the *Liberty Chimes?* It was about the little brig *Polly*, ever so long ago, and she was dismasted and floated for six months."

"Sure I remember," said Judson, with an air of profound relief. Briscoe's mind was still sound. "The *Polly* sailed from Boston and was wrecked in the Gulf Stream. And her crew stayed on her, and she drifted clear to the coast of Africa, and the captain and one sailor were left alive at the end of six months. It's one of the greatest true stories of the sea that ever was."

"And how did they do it?" shouted Briscoe, his worn face ablaze with excitement. "This wise Yankee skipper of the *Polly* took an iron tea-kettle and a big iron pot and he fitted them together and used the barrel of a flintlock musket, *and he made a condenser!*"

"He distilled salt water," cried Judson, "by setting the contraption on the brick oven in the galley. It was only a tiny trickle of fresh water, but it kept them alive!"

"I've got the stuff to distill plenty of water, Jud, all that this rotten old junk will need. Was n't I the prize boob to overlook a bet like that?"

He grabbed Judson and led him to the motor-dory which had been hoisted and secured at the after end of the vessel. They clambered in and sat down, weak and trembling. It was Briscoe, the handy mechanic, who peered into the lockers, carefully took stock of his treasures, and jubilantly announced:

"All here, every bit of it, boy! The gasoline blow-torch I was using that day we sighted the junk, when I was overhauling the dory; the extra coil of copper tubing that I had left over, at least twenty feet of it, and fifteen feet more that I can rip out of the boat. A stick of solder, and, glory be, the five-gallon can I fetched up the gasoline in when I was filling the bow tank."

"How long will it take you to make a condenser?" demanded Judson, with a frightened glance at the sun. "These pirates gave us until noon. Then it's good-bye to Mr. Grayson."

"I can finish this little trick by then," was the confident answer. "If I don't, we'll hand them over our keg of water, anyhow. That's what we decided to do, was n't it? You go get His Seven-Foot Majesty, Captain Ah Fong-su. I'll make his eyes pop out. His Chinese joss fell down on the job. Now watch the American miracle-man get busy."

It was a revived, efficient, light-hearted Briscoe that whistled as he sat in the motor-dory and deftly handled his wrenches and pliers. Captain Ah Fong-su watched him with a perplexed scowl until Judson was able to make it clear to him by means of signs and gestures and vigorous use of that fateful word *ding-shui*. Then the stately Chinese skipper bowed low in homage to the genius of Briscoe and strode to the forward end of the poop. There he stood and bellowed many words at his bloodthirsty crew. They were greatly agitated and began crowding nearer. It was plain to see that the captain had told them

prodigious tidings, of the magic which was at work to produce streams of fresh water.

A crafty man was Captain Ah Fong-su, and he invited the crew to send two or three delegates aft in order that they might behold the wonderful thing with their own eyes and report it to the others. They hung back, suspecting a trick, but curiosity overcame their fears, and, after much yelling and shoving, two sailors were fairly thrust up the ladder by their companions.

Briscoe looked up as he saw them timidly approach, and to Judson he said with a broad grin:

"The old boy has got 'em going. They won't think of harming us. It will be perfectly safe to set up the condenser in the waist of the vessel, after I try it out. Then they can watch it work."

A ten-foot length of the copper pipe was wrapped round and round the handle of an oar to shape it into a coil. Then the oar-handle was pulled out, and the long pipe was curled into what is called "the worm" of a still. One end of the coil was carefully soldered into the outlet of the five-gallon tin can, leaving the other end free. Then Briscoe took one of the empty water kegs from the storeroom and bent the coil so that it sat up and down inside the keg, propping the five-gallon can so that it was close to the keg and considerably higher. He filled the tin can with sea water and vigorously pushed the air pump of his gasoline blow-torch to increase the pressure and make a tremendously hot blue flame.

When this contrivance had been mounted on

deck, near the motor-dory, Briscoe sang out to Judson:

"Now make these Chinese devils work for a drink. Get four or five buckets and let 'em bring salt water and keep it moving. Later we can rig the big pump and hitch on a length of deck-hose."

Captain Ah Fong-su rumbled the command and two or three more Chinese sailors came scampering aft. It was easy to make them understand what was wanted. They cut lengths of halliards and bent them to wooden buckets and dipped them overside and stood waiting in an eager and breathless row, furiously jabbering at each other. Briscoe placed his blow-torch so that the roaring flame played against the five-gallon can. The Chinese ceased their racket and stood as though awed. It seemed an eternally long while before the salt water in the can began to bubble, and then from the free end of the copper coil there floated a wisp of steam.

Briscoe yelled for cool salt water to be poured into the keg which contained the coil. One bucket after another was poured in to run out of the spigot hole at the bottom. It was cool enough to begin to condense the steam that forced its way through the copper coil. And as the steam cooled in this manner, it turned into fresh water which dropped from the free end of the copper pipe that came out of the keg through the small hole bored for a bamboo tube when the rascally Chinese sailors had stolen the supply.

Briscoe held a cup under the end of the copper

pipe and very slowly the fresh water dripped into it. The can still held a flavor of gasoline, but this made no difference. It was blessed fresh water to cool the swollen tongue and ease the burning throat. Soon the condenser was steaming harder and the flow of water increased. In order to convince the Chinese sailors that the miracle had been actually wrought, the two who were lugging buckets of salt water were allowed to sip the distilled water as it came hot from the copper coil. They ran to the edge of the quarterdeck and yelled the incredible tidings to the crowd in the waist below.

Captain Ah Fong-su was undignified for once. He shook hands with Briscoe instead of clasping his own two hands in the Chinese custom, and a chuckle came echoing up from his mighty chest. Then he stooped to gaze into the motor-dory and, as if a big idea had occurred to him also, he hastened into some recess of the cabin and returned with two square five-gallon cans which had contained kerosene for the junk's lights. In great good-humor, Briscoe thumped him on the back and cried:

"Nothing slow about you, Confucius! I was just doping out that same little thing. This one condenser won't furnish enough water for all hands. And there is copper pipe enough for a couple more of 'em. But I have only the one blow-torch.'

Captain Ah Fong-su waved an arm forward and Briscoe nodded. They started off together and climbed down the ladder to the main deck. There was not the slightest danger that the crew would

molest them. These cut-throats were held spell-bound and delighted. They were fairly childish. First Captain Ah Fong-su marched straight to the forecastle door and lifted the heavy beam that barred it. Not a sailor moved to interfere. Out stepped Mr. Grayson, the captive, blinking in the glare of the sun, tottering as he walked, but able to say:

"There, I felt sure something would turn up. And if it did n't, something else would. Much obliged to you, I 'm sure. They had some notion of slicing me with knives. What have you done to the wicked beggars? The deck is like a Sunday school."

"Go aft and get some food and water, sir, and then watch the circus," replied Briscoe. "By the way, Mendoza is no more. The captain stopped his clock for him."

"Good enough. It saves me the trouble of delivering him to Captain Malcolm Sharpe of the *True American*," observed Mr. Grayson, in his matter-of-fact way. "And so Captain Ah Fong-su bumped him off. I guess Mendoza deserved it, and hanging would have been more disagreeable."

Mr. Grayson pluckily footed it aft, refusing an escort, although it was evident that his nerves had been terribly shaken. Captain Ah Fong-su took Briscoe into the junk's galley or deck kitchen, which was partitioned off from the forecastle, and showed him the huge brick stove and the pots for boiling rice. Briscoe understood perfectly. He could make

two more condensers for the crew, and the steam could be generated on this brick oven. There was no lack of fuel. The forecastle and the heavy bulwarks could be chopped up.

With the two kerosene cans and the lengths of copper pipe that remained, Briscoe soon soldered and finished the two stills or condensers, and then you might have beheld an infernally active crew of scrawny Chinese sailors. The captain bossed and scolded and abused them without mercy, and there was no resentment. They were divided into watches in order to keep the work going night and day. Axes flew and the pile of firewood outside the galley door grew larger and larger. The cooks stoked like demons and a row of men fetched buckets of salt water to cool the copper coils. They dropped in their tracks and were kicked aside until the old boatswain rigged a length of cotton hose and the water was pumped into the coolers.

On the quarterdeck half a dozen sailors volunteered to keep the cool water flowing while Judson and Briscoe and Seaman Jones pumped up the blowtorch occasionally and kept the reservoir steaming. There was plenty of fuel for this still, twenty gallons of gasoline in the bow tank of the motor-dory, enough to keep the blessed trickle of fresh water going indefinitely. It seemed like a scanty flow, even from all three condensers, but in the course of twenty-four hours it meant a considerable store, and measurement showed that there would be no danger of acute suffering from thirst.

Food was running very short, but it was possible to exist a few days longer, and the hope of survival was much stronger with the specter of death from thirst no longer menacing. The junk floated placidly in the lonely reaches of the Pacific, as though her voyage could have no end. Judson and Briscoe could not help thinking now and then of the fate of that little Yankee brig *Polly* a hundred years ago, which had drifted unseen and unspoken for six months, clear across the Atlantic, finally to be discovered with two men left alive on her deck.

From the junk a sail had been sighted more than once, but too distant to be of use, and they fancied, now and then, that they saw the faint smudge of a steamer's smoke against the horizon. Hope had not died, and they expected each day to see a ship draw near enough to rescue them. Alas, at the end of another day, when the night drew down, and the sea was empty on every side, a sense of sadness oppressed them. They were in a mood to wonder if it was worth while to continue this wretched struggle for existence. This night happened to be cloudy, the stars overcast, looking more like wind than rain. It was a waste of effort to keep a lookout for a steamer's lights or the ghostly gleam of tall canvas.

Judson was listlessly leaning against the ponderous tiller, and Briscoe, who was wakeful, had just drifted out of the cabin. They were in no mood for talk. They listened to the sounds that were already familiar, the shuffling feet of the weary Chinese, the splash of the buckets of salt water and the

gurgle from the spigot hole of the keg, the steady roar of the blow-torch; and from forward the chug-chug of the pump brake-beam, and the shrill voices of the men at the galley door. The wind began to rise and the useless spars of the junk creaked and groaned a doleful lament.

Suddenly Briscoe glanced at the sea, his attention startled by a noise that was not in the least expected. It was the muffled beat of a steamer's engines borne to him against the wind. He stared agape and saw the lights, red and green and white, loom out of the cloudy darkness. The steamer was heading directly toward the junk which drifted on its errant and sightless way. There was an amazed blast from the steamer's whistle, then another. Even before the towering shape of the junk was vaguely discovered, the officers no doubt caught sight of the glare from the galley fire and the curious blue flame of the blow-torch aft. This made the confusion worse. It is no exaggeration to say that the steamer was totally dumbfounded, and the renewed clamor of her whistle sounded like a fit of hysterics. Orders were shouted from the bridge, the helm was put one way, and then another.

The result was that the bewildered steamer, with speed reduced, blundered into the junk. The collision was almost head-on. The steel prow bit deep into the wooden side amid a most awful crash of shattered plates and splintered timbers. The two vessels hung together in this manner while the steamer reversed her engines and endeavored to

back clear. The after part of the junk was undamaged, and Judson and Briscoe and Seaman Jones joined Mr. Grayson and Captain Ah Fong-su in beseeching the steamer to stand by. This was, in fact, just what the steamer was compelled to do, for her crumpled bow seemed to be sticking fast in the side of the junk.

The crew of the steamer, rushing forward to find out what they had run into and how badly their bow was smashed, experienced another shock. Up over the prow and the anchor chains, swarming like monkeys, came a horde of yelling Chinese sailors. They had no intention of waiting to be rescued. They were going while the going was good. They deserted the junk, to the very last man of them, as if an explosion had hurled them into the steamer. With more dignity, the little group on the lofty poop waited until they could make themselves heard. They were compelled to listen, however, for above the Chinese chorus rose the curses of the steamer's crew in the good old Anglo-Saxon tongue. The voice of one officer was positively tearful as he implored:

"Will somebody tell me where all these infernal Chinks rained from? And what kind of a misbegotten derelict have we rammed into, with yellow and blue hell fires burning at the ends of her?"

"The junk *Blossoms of the Heavenly Gardens*, from Canton for God knows where," shouted Mr. Grayson. "Four American seamen on board as castaways. Will you please take us off?"

"Americans! So are we," was the comforting reply. "We 'll drop a boat directly. Is your heavenly nuisance of a junk apt to sink very fast?"

"Not until you pull your bow out of her," answered Mr. Grayson. "You cut into her pretty deep."

"Very well. We'll shove ahead and hold as we are until you can come aboard us. Any of the Chinese crew hurt? There 's a million of 'em on deck here."

"The captain is investigating now, sir."

Presently Captain Ah Fong-su returned and made it clear that all his men were accounted for. He could find none left in the junk. He went into the cabin and reverently removed the tablets dedicated to the worship of the ancestral spirits. These he wrapped in one of the long embroidered silk hangings which he pulled from a wall. Captain Ah Fong-su was ready to go, taking no other possessions with him than his money and the ship's papers. A boat approached the stern of the junk and the four Americans descended a rope ladder. Captain Ah Fong-su was the last man to leave the vessel, silent, massive, composed.

They boarded the steamer and were shown into the mess-room where a negro steward was already setting the table, and it was wonderful beyond words to hear him say:

"Ham an' aiggs an' French fried potatoes a-comin' on th' run for you-all. Coffee ready right now. Eat hearty, foh you suttinly does look like hungry

men. Looks to me like you done forgot how a square meal tastes!"

They were blistered, unshaven, ragged tramps of the sea who bowed their heads and devoutly thanked God for their deliverance.

The master of the steamer came in as they sat there, a bearded, hearty man of the old school.

"Glad to see you," said he, in a simple manner. "Queer things do happen at sea. I am Captain Martin. Don't bother to tell me about it until you are fed and slept up. You have had a hard pull. I can see that."

"How badly are you damaged?" asked Mr. Grayson.

"All tight above the water-line. Fore-peak flooded, but we can jog along with good weather. That junk was a pretty solid obstruction to navigation. Luckily we are light, in ballast. The Chinese sailors can be stowed between-decks, and there is grub enough."

"I am sorry I can't interpret for Captain Ah Fong-su," said Mr. Grayson. "He is as fine a man as you'll ever find, white or yellow. He will be very grateful to you."

"I will put him and his men ashore where they can get helped by their own people."

"Where are you bound, may I ask, Captain Martin?"

"To Massacar and Samarang, for sugar and hemp. If you can't do any better, you can stick to this vessel and go home from there with me."

"Thank you, but we are in luck. Our own steamer, the *True American*, is to go to Batavia and thence to Massacar and Samarang. We will run across her in one of those ports."

"Then she was not lost?"

"No, indeed, Captain Martin. We were blown away in a squall while boarding the junk."

Judson Wyman and James E. Briscoe turned and looked at each other. For the moment they had forgotten ham and eggs and French fried potatoes.

"To Massacar and Samarang," murmured Briscoe. "I like those words even better than when I first heard 'em. We are seeing life, Jud, my boy. It's back to the *True American* and the merchant service for us."

"To finish the voyage with Captain Malcolm Sharpe," smiled Judson. "Well, the Pacific trade is n't so stupid as they used to call it when we were on the Western Ocean."

"She can come as quiet as she likes for a while, buddy."

"The same for me, Briscoe, James E. But I can't help wondering what the next voyage will be like."

THE END

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